AUGUST 5, 1985 • $1.95

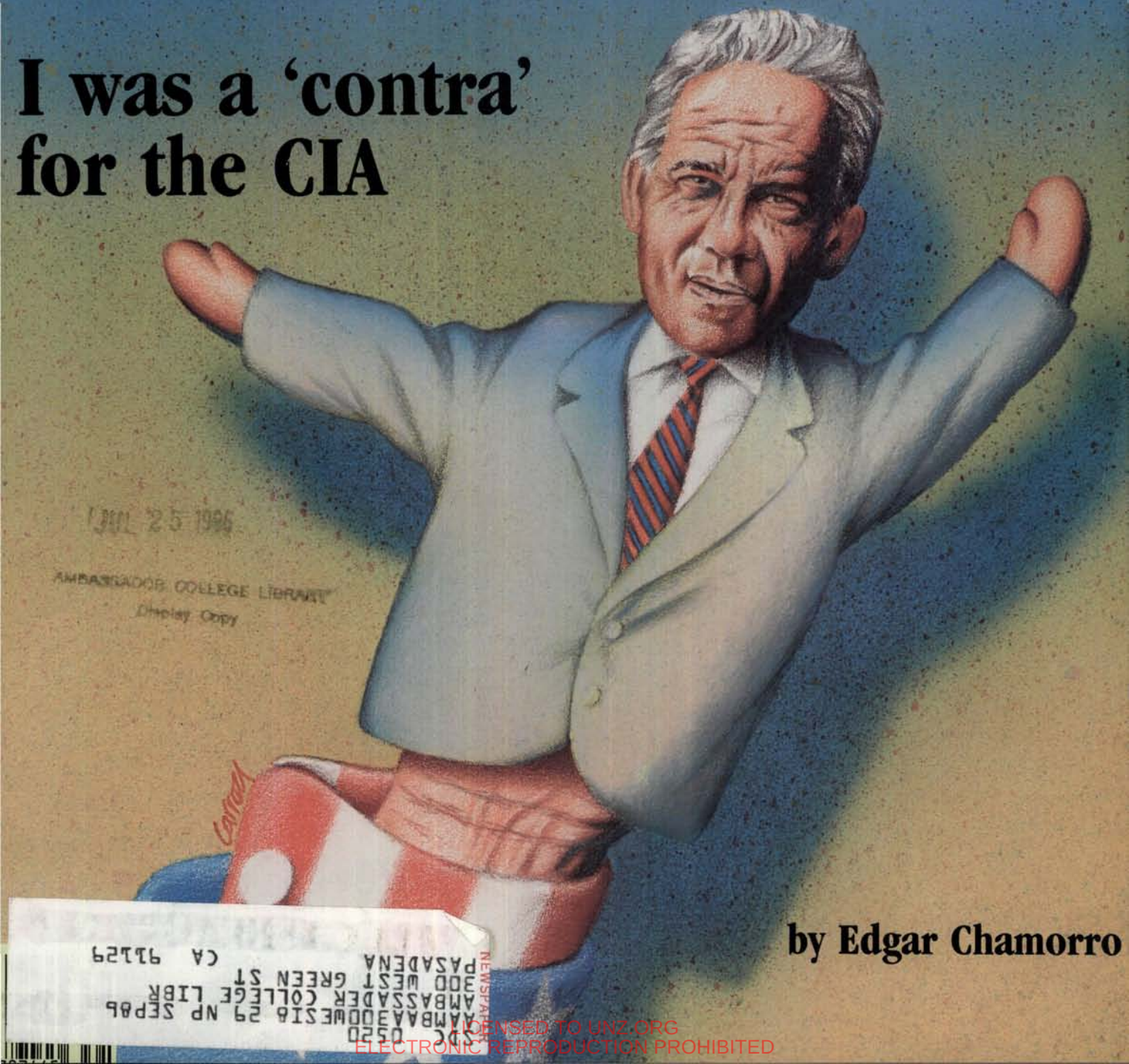
FRED BARNES:
EMOCRATS REGROU

John Hinckley's America

REAGAN'S SECRET QUOTAS • HELEN VENDLER ON JAMES MERRILL • TV BLACKS

THE NEW REPUBLIC

I was a 'contra' for the CIA



JUL 25 1986
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE LIBRARY
Display Copy

by Edgar Chamorro

NEWSPAPER
PASADENA CA 91129
300 WEST GREEN ST
AMBASSADOR COLLEGE LIBR
AMBAA300WESIB 29 NP SEP86
NYC 0520

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jackie West (white coat), Industrial Safety Engineer, and other Sun employees who are volunteer firefighters in Marcus Hook, Pa.

SUN, SAFETY AND THE VOLUNTEERS. At a moment's notice, Jackie West is ready to trade his Sun safety helmet for that of a fire captain. He's just one of the Sun people from our Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania, refinery who serve their local communities as volunteer firefighters.

As Jackie can tell you, the safety training they get while producing millions of gallons of Sunoco gasoline each day makes them experts at fire prevention.

"At the refinery, one of our most important jobs is safety. We train and drill regularly. In fact, Sun sends some of us to special firefighting schools.

"It's only natural that we use this experience to serve our families, friends and neighbors."

At Sun, we think putting our energy back into the community is just as important as getting it out.

WHERE THERE'S SUN THERE'S ENERGY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC

FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,681

WASHINGTON, D.C. — AUGUST 5, 1985

Editor-in-Chief and President
MARTIN PERETZ

Editor
MICHAEL KINSLEY
Literary Editor
LEON WIESELTIER
Senior Editors
FRED BARNES, ANN HULBERT,
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
Managing Editor
DOROTHY WICKENDEN
Associate Editor
JEFFERSON MORLEY
New Republic Books Editor
(Holt, Rinehart and Winston)
STEVE WASSERMAN
Films — STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater — ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Music — EDWARD ROTHSTEIN
Poetry — ROBERT PINSKY
Economics Correspondent
ROBERT KUTTNER
Contributing Editors
ABRAHAM BRUMBERG,
ROBERT COLES, HENRY FAIRLIE,
JAMES K. GLASSMAN, HENDRIK HERTZBERG,
JOHN KEEGAN, MORTON KONDRACKE,
R.W.B. LEWIS, MARK CRISPIN MILLER,
ROBERT B. REICH, MAGGIE SCARF,
RONALD STEEL, RICHARD L. STROUT,
E. V. THAW, ANNE TYLER,
NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN, MICHAEL WALZER,
C. VANN WOODWARD
West Coast Correspondent
MICKEY KAUS
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Assistant to the Editors
NANCY E. MILLER
Production Manager
PATRICIA A. HOPPER
Copy Editor
JAMIE BAYLIS
Production Associate
BRUCE STEINKE
Reporter-Researchers
MICHAEL HIRSCHORN, TERENCE MORAN,
AMY E. SCHWARTZ, DANIEL TREISMAN

Publisher
JEFFREY L. DEARTH
Associate Publisher
REED PHILLIPS
Controller
J. KRISTINE KLASMAN
Advertising Manager
JOAN M. STAPLETON
Circulation Director
TOM HICKS
Circulation Manager
GENE SITTENFELD
Assistant to the Controller
MARIA F. SALATTI
Circulation Assistant
ROBIN CHERRY
Assistant to the Advertising Manager
CATHERINE SCHILLING
Advertising Representative
KEVIN LONDON
Accounting Assistant
LYNN J. CLEMENT
Back Issues and Reception
DARLENE BUSCAGLIO
Leadership Network Advertising
ROBERT F. SENNOTT JR.

4 **TRB FROM WASHINGTON** ..... CRABGRASS ROOTS
Lobbying goes country.

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... Rambo was right; Glazer was wrong.

7 **THE EDITORS** ..... HONESTY AND HAPPY TALK
Stockman's truths v. Reagan's evasions.
NOTEBOOK
Angela on Maureen, Caddell on Coke, &c.

8 **PAUL SLANSKY** ..... AND IF IT WERE. . .
Tax reform by many other names.

9 **NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN** ..... THE PRESS: PACK OF FOOLS
Killer bees, missing kids, and other phony stories.

11 **MIKHAIL S. BERNSTAM & SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET** ..... PUNISHING RUSSIA
The grain boycott was working, until Reagan lifted it.

12 **FRED BARNES** ..... THE MAJORITY COMPLEX
Democrats beware. Political paralysis is taking over the party.

14 **MICHAEL HIRSCHORN** ..... LITTLE MEN ON CAMPUS
Floundering Democrats and their flourishing foes.

15 **JEREMY RABKIN** ..... REAGAN'S SECRET QUOTAS
Guess what? Even the White House is hooked on the civil rights sedative it most abhors.

18 **EDGAR CHAMORRO WITH JEFFERSON MORLEY** ..... CONFESSIONS OF A 'CONTRA'
Adventures with the CIA in the U.S.-run war against the Sandinistas.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: TRAVELING TO THE PAST
Back to the Future is fun; *Silverado* sprawls.

25 **MARTHA BAYLES** ..... ON TELEVISION: THE PROBLEM WITH POST-RACISM
Black superstars' popularity, among blacks and whites alike, doesn't mean the end of racism.

28 **HORACE FREELAND JUDSON** .... GENE GENIE
In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity
by Daniel J. Kevles

34 **HELEN VENDLER** ..... FEARS AND FAREWELLS
Late Settings by James Merrill

39 **BARBARA EHRENREICH** ..... JOHNNY, WE HARDLY KNEW YOU
Breaking Points
by Jack and Jo Ann Hinckley
with Elizabeth Sherrill

41 **LAURA OBOLENSKY** ..... ODD COUPLE
Her First American by Lore Segal

43 **JERUSALEM DIARIST** ..... FRESH EYES

COVER by Allen Carroll for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 18.

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 193, Number 6, Issue 3,681, August 5, 1985. (Printed on July 17, 1985.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 7 & 14, July 15 & 22, Aug. 12 & 19, and Sept. 16 & 23, 1985) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. Leadership Network advertising (212) 684-5500. Yearly subscriptions, $48; foreign, $73; Canada, $60. Back issues, $2.50 (includes postage & handling). ©1985 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and Bell & Howell, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster, OH 44691. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Subscribers:** Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to **Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 955, Farmingdale, NY 11737-0001.** For subscription problems call **800-645-9559** (In N.Y. State call 800-732-9119).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

CRABGRASS ROOTS

The art of lobbying continues to efflorescе. Early in the Reagan years it broke out of its prison of euphemism, as influence peddlers stopped pretending they were doing anything else. Other recent developments include: "one-stop shopping" at firms that employ big shots of both parties; the combined lobbyist/fund-raiser, who puts an elected official in his debt and then comes to call for clients; and the combined lobbyist/campaign strategist, who actually works for politicians and twists those politicians for corporate clients at the same time.

Comes now Robert Beckel, former campaign manager for Walter Mondale, who feels these developments have been inadequate. "Even the strongest Washington lobbying team a company can assemble will face powerful, well-connected, and well-funded lobbyists retained by opposing interests," says a handout from "National Strategies and Marketing Group, Inc.," a new firm founded by Beckel and two other Democratic politicos. "Efforts to influence public policy must employ strategies and techniques far more sophisticated than those used even five years ago."

Although Beckel's firm offers "extensive Washington representation services," its specialty is what it calls "grass-roots" lobbying. Beckel and his colleagues will use the skills and connections they developed in years of Democratic politicking to "*change* public opinion and *mobilize* public opinion" at the local level. For example, "I've got a 76-year-old woman who was a Mondale-Ferraro volunteer. I called her up and said, 'Milly, I've got a three-week campaign and I'll pay you $250 a week,' and she said, 'I'd love to do it; I've got time on my hands,' and I said, 'O.K., you know how to do it, you know the senior citizens. . . .' " Beckel's network then sets up protest groups, organizes petitions, writes to newspapers, demands meetings with congressmen, and so on. In short, the techniques of the antiwar movement and the McCarthy and McGovern campaigns are at last being made available to corporate America.

So far, Beckel's firm has signed up the Public Securities Association, a group of investment banks fighting to preserve the use of tax-free municipal bonds for nongovernmental purposes; a company that wants to prevent the burning of toxic wastes at sea, because its business is burning them on land; and the Professional Golf Association, which wants to save the deductibility of golf tournaments as a business expense, on the grounds that much of the money goes to charity. For his toxic waste client, for example, Beckel created the "Alliance to Save the Ocean."

Beckel and his colleagues are decent people. But the operation they've set up corrupts their own political souls, their party, and the political system.

Beckel bristles at the implication that he's "sold out," and he's surely correct that there's nothing inherently corrupt about wanting to stop living for politics and start earning a decent income at age 36. He argues that the connections he has to offer assure that he'll only be working for progressive causes. He admits he knew and cared nothing about either municipal bonds or toxic wastes before he was hired to lobby these issues. But "my learning curve's been pretty steep," he says, and he's now convinced that he's on the right side of both controversies. He says his liberal principles would prevent him from working for, say, an asbestos manufacturer, but: "In a marginal call, I have to make a living. If I'm out for one company in a fight with another company to see who can make more money, that doesn't bother me."

But when two competing companies hire lobbyists, it's because there's a public policy issue at stake. Neither side may be Attila the Hun, but it will be a remarkable coincidence if the side that hires Beckel is the same one an intelligent, engaged political activist would choose through disinterested reflection. In fact, Beckel is protected by his ignorance. He has no more idea than I do whether toxic wastes should be destroyed on land or at sea. Although he's busy awakening the nation to the perils of a polluted ocean, he says that if the other side had approached him "and said, 'help us to stop land-based toxic waste disposal because it's polluting the environment,' I'd say yes." That would be "progressive," too.

One of the Democratic Party's problems is that many of the ostensibly progressive programs it's associated with are actually just "social pork barrel," in Dave Stockman's devastating phrase: handouts to politically influential constituencies. Many regulations protect the economic status quo more than they protect workers, consumers, or the environment. Beckel's operation reinforces this dispiriting impression. It's the rich securities brokers, not the urban poor, who've hired Beckel to save industrial revenue bonds. It's fear of competition, not concern about the ocean, that led a land-based toxic waste disposer to finance a campaign against waste disposal at sea.

Beckel and his colleagues speak almost bitterly of the years they spent in the Democratic trenches. Looking at the condition of the Democratic Party now—not just its political condition but its moral condition—it's easy to understand how people would come to feel they'd been saps to waste their youths, energy, and intelligence on it. "National Strategies and Marketing Group, Inc.," is both a sign and a small cause of the party's continuing decline.

For the political system as a whole, Beckel's operation represents the seepage of Washington's own brand of toxic waste—political cynicism—into the rest of the country. Worse, what Beckel gets paid to do is to aggravate American democracy's biggest defect: special interest gridlock. It's easy enough to organize people in defense of some tax loophole or other; what's hard is to convince them we'll all be better off with a simpler system and lower rates. It's easy to prevent toxic wastes from being treated in any particular place; what's hard is for our society to make a mature decision that they must be treated *somewhere*. Beckel foresees a day when he'll have full-time operatives in every congressional district, ready to mobilize a campaign immediately for any client who walks in the door.

It all might be something to worry about, until you remember that Beckel's last campaign lost 49 states.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Gray,
Oxford University, England:
"boldly original way of making
self familiar with the key ideas that
have shaped our world. Scholarly,
compelling, and entertaining—a most
useful series."

Listen to Jefferson.

Revolutions are still fought over his ideas.

The ideas of Jefferson, Paine, Thoreau, Marx, Rousseau and others have changed the world. They are still changing the world today. Knowledge Products has gathered the works of the world's most influential writers into a collection of professionally produced, provocative audio tapes. **Significant excerpts from each work are included, but these tapes are far more than a mere reading. The Audio Classics discuss the authors, their ideas, and the historical conflicts that inspired their work. A dramatic format brings the classics to life, making them entertaining as well as informative.**

The Investment in Time: The Hours You Aren't Using.

If you spend 20 minutes a day in your car, you have time to listen to the ideas of Locke, Mill, Tocqueville and others. Put a cassette into your player and learn, anywhere and any time. The Knowledge Products Audio Classics Series can become a mobile seminar.

The Investment in Money: No Obligation For 30 Days.

Send for our first package of tapes. Choose the terms you prefer—$47.50 per month for four months ($190—less than $8 per cassette), or save 10% by paying the advance price of $170 (just over $7 per cassette). Two tapes will arrive approximately every 30 days, 24 cassettes in all. Depending on your circumstances, this may be tax deductible.

The Value of Great Ideas.

This 'age of information' in which we live is not necessarily the age of wisdom. The Audio Classics Series is designed for those who have the desire but not enough time to lead what Socrates called 'the informed life'.

There is absolutely no risk to you. This is the Knowledge Products guarantee: return the first package of tapes within 30 days, and you owe nothing. If you become dissatisfied at any point in the series, cancel and receive a pro rata refund for all the tapes you haven't received.

The Complete Audio Classics Series

1. • **COMMON SENSE**
   • **DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**
2. • **CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**
   • **THE LIBERATOR**
3. • **WEALTH OF NATIONS (Part 1)***
4. • **WEALTH OF NATIONS (Part 2)***
5. • **THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO**
   • **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT**
6. • **THE PRINCE**
   • **DISCOURSE ON VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE**
7. • **ON LIBERTY**
   • **VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN**
8. • **REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE**
   • **RIGHTS OF MAN**
9. • **LEVIATHAN***
10. • **THE FEDERALIST PAPERS***
11. • **TWO TREATISES OF GOVERNMENT***
12. • **DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA***

**One title in a two-tape set*

For telephone orders, call toll free
1-800-453-9000 Ext. 30

THE KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED IS NOW ON TAPE.

Order the Audio Classics Series at No Risk. Cancel with full refund within 30 days if not satisfied.

☐ Send me the first two tapes, Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence. I understand that the balance of 22 tapes will arrive in packages of two approximately every 30 days. I will pay:

By Credit Card

☐ $47.50 per month for four months ($190 total payment)

By Credit Card or Check

☐ $170 advance payment (A savings of 10%)

☐ Personal Check ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

Acct. # _____

Expires on: _____

Signature _____

☐ Please send me your brochure for more information.

☐ Name _____
Please print clearly

Address _____

_____

State, Zip _____

Phone number _____

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

120 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108

© Knowledge Products 1985

NR30

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

POWs, Lost And Found

To the editors:

Contrary to your assertion that the "mustering of the available evidence is compelling," James Rosenthal's "The Myth of the Lost POWs" (July 1) presents a selective and superficial use of the available data on whether there are live POWs in Southeast Asia.

There is no reference to Lt. Gen. Eugene Tighe, retired director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, who has stated his belief that over 50 Americans are still being held in captivity. Gen. Tighe, of course, has had access to intelligence the rest of us have not.

Rosenthal spends a good deal of time creating a straw man argument that most of the 2,477 MIAs are not alive, noting, for example, that 1,186 of the MIAs are categorized as killed in action/bodies not recovered. A companion statistic to that 1,186 number is that 71 of the missing men were confirmed prisoners of war. (The National Archives—the only disinterested player in the debate—lists 81 POWs.) Since North Vietnam has declared that 55 men (at least one of whom is not even on the official MIA list) died in captivity, what has happened to the rest of those men?

Rosenthal accepts DIA's analysis and downplaying of refugee-sighting reports as gospel. Even then, there are five sighting reports that are credible (and highly classified). However, careful analysis of the declassified sighting reports (i.e., through 1979) shows a "mind-set to debunk" the reports, in General Tighe's words.

As one example, a sighting of 30 to 36 POWs in April 1975 (i.e., after all the POWs were supposedly repatriated) was determined to be a sighting of 20 POWs in January 1975. There was no explanation for the quantum leap in time and numbers. Indeed, General Tighe was recently quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* as saying: "Some people [in DIA] have been disclaiming good reports for so long that it's become habit-forming." Please keep in mind that over half the sighting reports are still classified.

Rosenthal next impugns Bobby Garwood for his reported sightings of 70 POWs. He fails to mention that Representative Bill Hendon, who has had access to both the highly classified reports in the Pentagon and to confidential written information from Garwood, states publicly that he finds Garwood very credible because he independently corroborates classified data. Rosenthal notes that Garwood never made these sightings public, but is unaware of Garwood's explanations to POW activists and to reporters. When he returned home, totally disoriented from 14 years in captivity, he was immediately met by lawyers who advised him to say nothing about anything; he had already been warned by Vietnamese officials that men would be killed if he talked. Hence, his initial public silence. Contrary to Rosenthal's assertion that *Conversations with the Enemy* does not mention other POWs left behind, a close reading of pages 257 and 258 suggests otherwise.

Ironically, Rosenthal establishes early on the possibility that 644 men could be left—more than double the outside number claimed by anyone else. So he quickly changes the subject, attacking former representative LeBoutillier, who says he has "private sources" who say there are live POWs. Yet reporters such as Bill Paul of *The Wall Street Journal* and Carlton Sherwood of *The Washington Times* have published similar comments, based on not-for-attribution interviews with present and former officials in the intelligence community.

J. THOMAS BURCH JR.
National Coordinator
National Vietnam Veterans Coalition
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

I want to congratulate you for "telling it like it is" on the POW/MIA issue.

I served as chairman of the House Select Committee on U.S. Involvement in Southeast Asia in 1975-76 and the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia. Based on the evidence we gathered, we concluded there were no Americans being held against their will. Nothing has happened since that time to change my mind.

GILLESPIE V. MONTGOMERY
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Marxism, Racism, Un-Truism

To the editors:

Nathan Glazer's essay "Nazis and Soviets" (July 8) proffers a number of outmoded distortions that may partly explain his own professed confusion over the nature of the East-West conflict.

First, the proposition that the Soviet Union is no longer expansionist may be argued among comfortable Western analysts, but I would expect the proposition to be taken as fatuous among the people of Indochina, South Yemen, Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. What planet has Mr. Glazer been on since 1975?

Second, apart from being gnostic and anti-intellectual, Marxism is explicitly racist and particularly anti-Semitic. In general, racism fits in neatly with Marxist ideology: both are grounded in hate, both reject argument, and both constitute an apologetic for the lawless exercise of power. Glazer's hard distinction between racism and Marxism suggests that he has read little of Marx and ignored much of hard-core Marxist behavior.

Third, the Soviet gulag is not just a Stalinist aberration of yesteryear. The camps exist, today, scattered through the Soviet Union in more than 2,000 centers of forced labor imposed on political, cultural, and religious dissidents.

Fourth, Glazer's comparison of yesterday's Argentina with today's Yugoslavia in a manner favorable to Yugoslavia is oddly (and tellingly) inapt for the point he tries to make about letting authoritarians off the hook. Never mind that Argentina is now a functioning democracy bringing to justice her political gangsters. Does Glazer *know* about the systematic torture and persecution of Croatian dissidents in Yugoslavia by Serbian Communists who rule that jigsaw nation? Does he care?

JOHN R. DUNLAP
San José, California

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE NEW REPUBLIC
AUGUST 5, 1985

HONESTY AND HAPPY TALK

David Stockman came here for lunch a few weeks before his resignation as director of the Office of Management and Budget. The conversation was supposed to be off-the-record. But there's no harm now in saying that he suffered repeated outbreaks of the ailment that made his tenure with the Reagan administration so difficult: compulsive honesty. How, we would ask, does Mr. Stockman defend some Reagan nostrum or other that obviously violates either economic reality or President Reagan's own alleged free-market principles? "Oh"—sly smile—"you're not going to get me to talk about *that*." Pause. Nervous drag on cigarette. Twitch. Then: "Of course everyone knows that's ridiculous." Or, "It's nothing but a loophole for the rich."

Not all of the policies that Stockman opposed were favors for the rich. His vision of government is too austere for our taste. Nevertheless, his clear-eyed understanding of the difference between true progressive government and mere "social pork barrel" is wisdom that liberals need to learn; his similar understanding of the difference between the interests of the economy and the interests of the affluent is a rebuke to his fellow conservatives; and his habit of telling unpleasant truths is an example for everyone in public life. We wonder, though, whether Stockman's compulsive honesty will be any less of a handicap in the business world than it was in the world of government.

In the political context, another word for honesty is leadership. The failure of this kind of leadership among our elected officials is why the federal budget Stockman leaves behind is a disaster, with deficits higher than anyone could have imagined when he took office. Although the Democrats have displayed no lack of cowardice, the greatest burden of blame belongs to President Reagan. He's the one with the reputation as one of the great political leaders of our era. He's the one with the legendary electronic charisma and the overwhelming political mandate.

But Reagan's reputation is based on "happy talk" leadership, which consists of telling people what they want to hear. Real democratic leadership is persuading people to accept important truths that they *don't* want to hear. Reagan has told Americans that the route to salvation is cutting their taxes and reducing *other people's* government benefits. The truth is that *your* middle-class entitlements must be pruned (including Social Security) and *your* taxes must be raised, or our future prosperity is in peril. Leadership was FDR getting isolationist America into the war against Nazism, or LBJ pushing through the Civil Rights Act. Leadership isn't persuading people to accept a tax cut.

After decades of indulgence by politicians of both parties, it may take presidential leadership on the scale of these earlier triumphs to persuade the American people to accept some short-term sacrifices for their own long-term good. As a wildly popular president at the crest of his second term, Ronald Reagan is better positioned for such a historic act of leadership than anyone in the recent past or foreseeable future. He should reflect that it takes a Moses to lead his people through the desert. Ushering them into the Promised Land only requires a maître d'.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

□ SELLING SOFT DRINKS LIKE POLITICIANS, con't.: With the catastrophic marketing failure of "New Coke," chalk up another profitable disaster for political consultant Patrick Caddell, the man who's made a fortune by failing to find the pulse of the American people (George McGovern . . . Jimmy Carter . . . Gary Hart . . .) and possibly our nation's leading example of that all-American phenomenon known as "upward failure." The Coca-Cola company hired Caddell to help reshape the image of its product, just as he does for politicians. We noted earlier that the prospect of political flimflammery flooding the world of commerce is far more alarming than the earlier fear that advertising gimmickry would corrupt the world of politics. (See Notebook, June 10.) So we're reasonably pleased that this initial experiment was a failure.

□ HOME FOR COCKTAILS: If you'd like to be arrested in front of the South African Embassy, like 3,000 other people over the past eight months, don't worry about letting it mess up your evening. *The New York Times* reports that one group arranging the arrests passes out a memo assuring potential arrestees that no one has yet been incarcerated, no one has ever had to appear in court, and "the process is usually finished by 6 p.m."

□ HOW MANY POINTS? The Army has taken out a 24-year, $400 million mortgage to finance a new light-infantry base at Fort Drum, New York. The Army's acting comptroller, Harry M. West III, told *The Washington Post* that this novel financing arrangement would avoid adding to the federal deficit. Of course this is absurd. It makes no difference whether the Army gets $400 million from the Treasury, which borrows it, or borrows the money itself. The only difference is that the Army doesn't have to count the borrowed $400 million in this year's budget. If the Office of Management and Budget (which Defense Secretary Weinberger actually once ran, hard as that is to believe) allows every federal agency to start building its own mini-deficit like this, there's no hope.

□ AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on "Forward-Looking Strategies of Implementation for the Advancement of Women and Concrete Measures to Overcome Obstacles to the Achievement of the Goals and Objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women for the Period 1986 to the Year 2000: Equality, Development, Peace" is meeting in Nairobi. It has attracted the usual types who are drawn to gabfests: some too-earnest folk, but mostly pushy windbags who make themselves delegates from constituencies so broadly defined that almost anyone could represent them. (Angela Davis, there unofficially, complained that the head of the official U.S. Delegation, Maureen Reagan, "is not at all representative of the masses of women in the United States." Davis, erstwhile revolutionary and twice Communist Party candidate for vice president, doubtless thinks she herself *is* representative.) The effort to deal with women's problems on a worldwide scale is absurd. Yes, women are women; but women in the African desert have problems so vastly different from Chinese women, whose problems are also so very different from women in America, that only a most reductionist and manipulative feminism would presume to consider them all in one big vat. In truth, however, the manipulation in Nairobi is not being done by feminists. A brazen propaganda exercise on behalf of political goals that have nothing to do with the rights and interests of women has been orchestrated by the usual alliance of communist and Arab states. Their particular and tiresome target is, yes, again, Zionism, cited along with imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, apartheid, racism, and exploitation as the prime impediments to the advancement of women. This is hogwash. The anti-Zionist harangues emanate from representatives of nations where women are virtually chattels, with no right to vote, inherit, marry freely, divorce, drive, or own property. Given the fundamentalist revival in the Arab world, in fact, more and more women are likely to end up with less and less of these rights. In some of these countries, clitoral circumcision is still commonly enforced. That such oppressors of women should be thought credible by so many women is their cruel joke.

President Reagan talks about taxes.

AND IF IT WERE . . .

". . . And the way I see it, if our current tax structure were a TV show, it would either be 'Foul-ups, Bleeps and Blunders,' or 'Gimme a Break.' If it were a record album, it would be 'Gimme Shelter.' If it were a movie, it would be *Revenge of the Nerds*, or maybe *Take the Money and Run*. . . ."

—President Reagan addressing students at Northside High School in Atlanta on June 6, 1985

". . . And if it were a breakfast cereal, it would be Trix. If it were a comic book, it would be *Cracked* or *Mad*. If it were a clock, it would be cuckoo. If it were a coffee, it would be Chock Full O' Nuts. If it were a movie, it would be *Going Berserk*, or maybe *Stop Making Sense*. If it were a meat, it would be baloney. If it were a song, it would be "What's Goin' On," or "Call Me Irresponsible," or maybe one of Frank's, "Something Stupid." If it were a game show, it would be "Jeopardy." If it were a soda, it would be Tab. If it were a laundry detergent, it would be All, and if it were a cigarette, it would be More. If it were a rock group, it would be Dire Straits or Scandal. If it were a trash bag, it would be Hefty. If it were a toilet bowl cleaner, it would be Vanish. If it were a TV dinner, it would be turkey. If it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were a letter of the alphabet, it would be 'owe.' If it were a constellation, it would be the Big Dipper, and if it were a movie, it would be *Apocalypse Now*, or maybe *Charade* or *Foul Play*. If it were a baseball play, it would be called stealing, and if it were a man's name, it would be Rob. If it were a bread, it would be Wonder. If it were a fruit, it would be bananas. If it were a paper towel, it would be Bounty, and if it were a household appliance, it would be a vacuum. If it were a movie, it would be *In Cold Blood* or *Hanky Panky*. If it were a scouring pad, it would be S.O.S. If it were a game, it would be Boggle. If it were a modeling clay, it would be Play-Doh. If it were a candy, it would be Chuckles, or maybe Snickers, and if it were a movie, it would be *The Black Hole* or *Easy Money*. If it were a fish it would be flounder. If it were a vehicle it would be a taxi. If it were a sandwich it would be turkey, or maybe baloney, and if it were a can of soup, it would be turkey. If it were a movie, it would be *Shaft* or *The Sting* or *Help!* If it were a snack, it would be nuts. If it were a movie, it would be *High Anxiety*, or maybe *Hardly Working* or *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, or maybe *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, and if it were a book, it would be . . . if it were a book, it would be . . . well, you get the idea."

PAUL SLANSKY

Paul Slansky is writing a book about Ronald Reagan's political career.

THE PRESS

PACK OF FOOLS

JOURNALISM'S two enduring south-coming-north stories are killer bees and Mexican wetbacks. The difference between them is that the bees haven't yet made it across the Rio Grande; the Mexicans have. It is a cardinal tenet of our reportage that monthly, daily—even hourly—hordes, waves, swarms, and armies of short, swarthy, poorly complected, non-English-speaking persons cross the river, inundating, burying, drowning, and in general overwhelming the American Border Patrol.

In the last few weeks PBS has carried three stories elaborating on this familiar theme. The most recent had what are now stock shots of the Mexicans gathering at dusk to make their nocturnal rush across the river. This footage was followed by an interview with the inevitable official from the Immigration and Naturalization Service explaining that if nothing is done soon to stop the invasion, within five years life as we know it in the United States will be over.

Yet the program aired after the National Academy of Sciences released a white paper declaring: "There is no empirical basis at present for the widespread belief that the illegal alien population has increased sharply in the late 1970's and early 1980's; the only data available on recent trends, in fact, suggest that the population has increased little if at all since 1977, although entry attempts may have increased, possibly for no other reason than that the efficiency of the Border Patrol has increased, causing more entries to fail early and thus to be repeated."

The Academy points out that studies have long cast grave doubt on the existence of this "supposed onslaught of illegal migrants against our borders." Nevertheless, newspapers prefer to publish groundless "conjectural estimates" such as the one in the June 26 *Washington Post* fixing the range of illegals at between six million and 12 million. (The Academy says the highest number for which there is any evidence is four million.) Wouldn't you think that even your statistically average, gullible, puppylike reporter would know that when an official cites a range that varies by 100 percent he's confessing he hasn't the vaguest what the facts might be?

There have been warnings for years about INS estimates of the dimensions of this ersatz crisis. The Academy reminds us that as far back as 1978 a House of Representatives select committee concluded that "immigration issues are clouded by faulty data and inflamed passions—not a good combination for rational policy-making." Another report the next year repeated the warning, and last year yet another House report noted that "the Committee is deeply concerned about the unavailability of accurate and current statistical information on immigration matters."

JOURNALISM came unstuck a few years ago when Janet Cooke won a Pulitzer for a *Washington Post* story about a grammar school child who was turned into a dope fiend by his mother. Oh lord! the symposia this provoked. Journalism, journalism decided, had better take a prolix look at itself. But the Janet Cooke story was one reporter and one set of sloppy editors. The illegal immigration fiction has been purveyed by journalism as a whole, with divisive and harmful consequences. The debate over the never-passed Simpson-Mazzoli bill owed its special bitterness to the press-purveyed myth that the country was being inundated by illegals; American policy in Nicaragua and El Salvador has been influenced by a fear that if the wrong side wins, new waves of Central American illegals will be pushing down the fences and squiggling through the water culverts to get in here. This way to El Norte, mozzo.

The first symposium on the not-so-minor media immigration story disaster has yet to be called. When it is, the participants could break up into subgroups to discuss other imaginary crises, tragedies, and disastrous downward trends accepted as bedrock gospel fact thanks to the sedulously credulous and energetically uninformed reportage of most journalists. Editors and reporters are fact-impervious even when they read the facts in their own newspapers.

Lisbeth B. Schorr, a lecturer at Harvard University, wrote recently in *The Washington Post* Op-Ed page:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

America's young are dying at an accelerating rate, smashed up by car accidents, homicide, drugs and suicide. Right? Wrong. Death rates for adolescents and young adults have reached an all-time low.

The startling reversal in recent mortality trends for 15- to 24-year-olds goes unheralded in the popular press. . . . The overall death rate (for them) which stood at 106 per 100,000 in 1960 reached a high of 129 in 1969. It began falling fairly steadily during the 1970s and dropped to 96 by 1983.

The greatest single cause of mortality in this age group, motor vehicle accidents, peaked in 1969 and again in 1979; it has now dropped below the 1960 rate. Although the media reflect a contrary impression, even adolescent suicide rates have been going down slightly since 1979. Birth rates among school-age girls were at their highest in the 1950s; today they are well below the levels of 1960 and 1970. Every indicator of marijuana and alcohol use is down since 1979.

With the illegal immigration story, a modicum of work and inventiveness would be needed to cast a correcting doubt on the malarkey. But not even a modicum would be necessary to back off the teen death hysteria that has seized our mass media recently. Most of the numbers Schorr refers to can be found in any copy of the *Statistical Abstract*, a reference book that even television stations, which pride themselves on never looking anything up, usually have on hand.

WE'RE NOT dealing with arcana here, but with garden variety numbers. Why, then, don't the employees of organizations that spend hundreds of thousands collecting the numbers of idiot public opinion polls look them up? Unconsciously, they don't want to do anything that would undercut the importance of their story. If they go out to that town in Texas where every network has reported there is a teenage suicide "epidemic," their professional justification for feeding off these young carcasses is that they are examples of "a national trend," "a growing problem everywhere." Without the trend the yarn begins to look uncomfortably like an act of ghoulish sensationalism.

"Jesuits die in threes," a statistician will say to explain that completely random events will sometimes cluster. The journalism of an early time was more prone to this kind of phenomenological worldview, looking on teenagers bumping themselves off in the Midland as a sad but fascinating coincidence. That spirit has lived on to animate ABC's Believe-It-Or-Not series, but responsible journalism can't tolerate a disordered world of random occurrences, and why should it when a plethora of sociologists and psychologists will impute significance to the accidental? If a reporter finds two experts, he can turn any event into an upmarket version of the killer bee story. For that is what trend stories really are: the announcement that something bad and goose-pimply is slouching toward the reader's hometown and into his very own suburb.

Even with the help of pseudo soc sci, the missing child story has defied all attempts to find a trend in it. But anyone who has read the side of a milk carton lately knows that, as fads go, it rivals Madonna, clad or unclad, and the Cabbage Patch doll. A heartrending run of missing children stories culminated last winter in the opening of a new appendage to the Department of Justice called the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The director of this desperately needed institution, Jay C. Howell, jumped into the big numbers game by estimating one and a half million kids vanish into the missing category every year.

That's a lot of kids. According to the *Statistical Abstract* (1984 edition) there are 30 million children ages five to 13, so that if Mr. Howell's estimate is anywhere near the money five percent of this group is disappearing every 12 months. One of the ways that the air was let out of the inflated figures for illegal immigrants was to check the Mexican census to see if there was a corresponding drop in the population on the other side of the border. None was detected. We can't do that with missing children, but it does stand to reason that if one child in 20 was disappearing every year every church group, every PTA, every organization remotely connected with kids and families would be in the streets demonstrating.

There are another 15 million kids ages 14 to 17. If you add them into the population from whom the missing are drawn, that still works out to slightly more than three percent of the nation's children and youth who vanish without a trace. In a decade, that means that 15 million people have gone through the doughnut hole into the anti-world. The numbers, of course, are preposterous on their face and would have been shot down long ago if reporters or their editors, who are supposed to be smarter, had violated the professional ban against taking deep breaths and thinking clear thoughts.

ONE NEWSPAPER did move dangerously close to infringing on the no-straight-thinking prohibitions. *The Sacramento Bee* sent a reporter to interview Mike Kelly, criminal identification specialist with the California Department of Justice's Missing-Unidentified Persons Unit. Kelly said there are currently 2,955 missing person reports on file with his department—about one-tenth the number reported missing each year. The reason there aren't more reports filed with Kelly's office is simple: 97 percent of all missing persons return home within 30 days. "We did a survey of 13 law enforcement agencies representing about a fourth of the state's population," he said. "We found that 50 percent of all missing persons return home within seven days, another 30 percent return home within 14 days, and the remaining 17 percent within 30 days. That leaves us with three percent."

Last year in California somewhat fewer than 800 people of all ages were logged in as missing more than 30 days. Assume that 600 of them were children. Since California makes up ten percent of the total population, we can extrapolate that about ten times that number, somewhere between 6,000 and 7,000 children, are missing more than 30 days nationally. Otherwise, if Mr. Howell's estimate of a million and a half were correct, there would have to be 150,000 missing from California alone, or 250 times more than the reported total.

You can't call the missing child scare a hoax because that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

implies knowing deception, and what we have been made victims of is unknowing deception. This is an unwitting or witless conspiracy by people in the missing children business. That includes the media, which feast off the sensation, which is sad enough without hype or press agentry.

Nevertheless, the numbers cited in missing children articles and programs are conservative compared to those bandied around when the topic is drugs or sexual molestation of children or functional illiteracy or homosexuality or you name it. Then the ten-percent law is invoked. According to this law, whatever it is, ten percent of the population do it or have it done to them or suffer from it.

When most journalistic disasters are detected, the "responsible" press gets exculpated, but on these imaginary stories there's no difference between *The Wall Street Journal* and *The National Enquirer*. Either one will print any kind of cretinous nonsense if it be uttered by a soi-disant expert. It beats going and finding the facts for oneself, and saves a reporter from doing the impermissible—calling up an editor and saying, "I don't know." In Newsland there are only two unknowns: the cure for cancer and the common cold.

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

Reagan was wrong about the embargo.

PUNISHING RUSSIA

THE REAGAN administration can't seem to decide just how it feels about the use of boycotts and embargoes as instruments of American foreign policy. In 1981 it lifted the grain embargo imposed by Jimmy Carter in January 1980 as a reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan, and in 1983 it promised the Soviets that the U.S. would never again resort to such a measure against them. Administration officials argued that the embargo had not worked, and in any case, that political differences should not be allowed to interfere with free trade. Now it has resurrected the idea, in response to Sandinista intransigence in Managua and Shiite terrorism at the airport in Beirut.

Whatever the merits of these recent moves, one thing is clear: Reagan was wrong about the Soviet grain embargo. It had severely undermined the Soviet economy, and drastic measures were being taken to repair the damage. On January 18, 1981, two days before Jimmy Carter left office, the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted a decree designed to increase sharply the role of the private sector in Soviet agriculture. The Soviets evidently assumed that Ronald Reagan, a strong anticommunist, would continue Carter's embargo. But this measure, the most dramatic move toward free-market policies since the death of Lenin, was never implemented. Soon after taking office, Reagan lifted the limits on American sales of grain. The edict was quickly suppressed, and the state's power was left intact.

The heading was cumbersome—"Additional Measures for Increasing the Amount of Agricultural Production in the Private Subsidiary Plots of Citizens"—but the edict was straightforward. It abolished the existing limits on the use of private land for farming and called for the sale of socialized livestock to the private sector. The State Bank was instructed for the first time in Soviet history to provide credits on liberal terms to private plot holders, which could be used to purchase livestock and farm machinery. The measure called for the increased use of the market to set prices. It stated, in part:

> The Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR stress that the cattle on the private subsidiary plots of citizens . . . are to be used according to the desires of their owners for the satisfaction of their personal needs, for sale to consumer cooperative organizations at agreed on prices, for sale at markets, for sale to state supply organizations, as well as for other needs. . . .
>
> Sovkhozy and other state agricultural enterprises shall issue to the families, at the state farm's expense, young livestock, as well as give them assistance in the construction of necessary outbuildings . . . with the goal of raising the interest level of young families in the creation and development of private units. . . .
>
> State farms and other agricultural enterprises have been authorized to include . . . contracts [with various categories of individuals] . . . for the raising and purchasing of livestock and poultry and for purchasing of surplus milk. . . .
>
> It is important to create everywhere a social climate in which . . . citizens will feel they are doing something of use to the state by raising livestock and poultry on their personal plots and engaging in vegetable gardening and fruit growing. . . .

On April 1, 1981, Ronald Reagan revoked the embargo. The renewed availability of American grain enabled the Soviets to provide sufficient feed for livestock, and the private plots edict disappeared. It has become a "non-decree," and no longer exists on the published list of measures affecting agriculture.

This is not the only evidence of the effectiveness of the U.S. grain embargo. Supporters of Reagan's policy have argued that the Soviets were able to replace American grain by turning to other major exporters, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, and others, and that the restrictions on American exports had little real effect on the Soviet economy.

Yet the Soviets' needs were not met by the increase in grain sales by other countries. The Soviet grain harvest in 1979, when Carter proclaimed the embargo, was very poor. The output had been increasing over the preceding three years, and then had dropped from 237 million metric tons in 1978 to 179 million in 1979. Nature continued to cooperate with the American president. In 1980 there was another bad harvest, of 189 million metric tons, and in 1981 a disastrous one of 160 million. Judging from the Soviet imports of grain since the embargo was lifted, the demand for foreign grain after the 1979 harvest failure was about 45 million metric tons. During the embargo the Sovi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ets were only able to purchase 31 million metric tons in the world market—30 percent less than what they required. Their increased purchases from other countries did not enable them to collect sufficient amounts of grain to feed their livestock, and the production of meat suffered.

At the time, the Reagan administration expressed dismay over the effect of the embargo on the American rural economy and the farm vote. But the restrictions did not lead to a decline in our agricultural exports. Because of the dramatic increase in 1979 in the Soviet demand for grain, the total world demand went up. American farmers gained from this situation despite the Carter embargo. While countries like Argentina and Canada increased their sales to the Soviets, the United States increased its exports to other grain importers. According to the Office of Technology Assessment, American grain exports actually increased, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the world supply. The American share of the world grain market went up in the year of the embargo by two percent.

As the Soviets, and particularly Mikhail Gorbachev (who was in charge of agriculture for the party from 1979 to 1981), well know, the combination of a continued American embargo and inefficient collective and state agricultural systems would have resulted in unmitigated disaster in a few more years. (The Soviets continued to have consecutively bad harvests until 1984.) But fortuitously for them, Ronald Reagan chose to follow the urgings of his political entourage concerned with the Midwest farm vote rather than those of his closest advisers on Soviet affairs. Is it too much to conclude that in economic terms this president has done more to preserve the collectivist system in the Soviet Union than perhaps any previous occupant of the White House?

MIKHAIL S. BERNSTAM AND SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET

Mikhail S. Bernstam is a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. Seymour Martin Lipset is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and a professor at Stanford University. His most recent book is the forthcoming *Consensus and Conflict* (Transaction Books).

Political paralysis is setting in.

THE MAJORITY COMPLEX

THE SETTING was the Blue Room of the Shoreham Hotel, once one of Washington's tonier nightclubs. The occasion was the first gathering of a new organization called the Democratic Policy Commission, made up mostly of elected Democratic officials, including 11 senators, 20 representatives, and ten governors. They were there to discuss what ails the party. Not that much, it turns out. President Reagan is a problem (one commission member said the Great Communicator has made it impossible for Democrats to use TV effectively anymore), and so is the economy. But wait. Reagan is in his last term in the White House and the recovery is an economic house of cards that is sure to tumble soon. And besides, the American people are really Democrats at heart.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, a similar line of reasoning cheered up the beleaguered Republicans. Just wait until President Franklin Roosevelt is gone. Sit tight and the economic trickery of the New Deal will come back to haunt America. Then the GOP will be restored to its proper place as America's ruling party. The analogy between Republicans in the 1930s and Democrats today can be overworked, but it has at least one striking aspect, and that has nothing to do with ideological inflexibility. Republicans made accommodations, grudging but real, to the New Deal, and many Democrats now are reconciling themselves to scraping off the sharper edges of their liberalism. What Democrats are unable to shed is their majority complex, the notion that they are, now and forever, the true and only representatives of the people. This is a bad attitude. It breeds arrogance, elitism, and paralysis. Look what happened to the Republicans: even when Roosevelt was gone, they lost the next presidential election.

The Democrats have deceived themselves into thinking it won't take much on their part to get the party back in power. The policy commission was told by economist William D. Nordhaus of Yale University that an economic collapse was imminent. This was sweet music. "The Reagan economic miracle is unsustainable and unwise," he said. What with "economic turbulence" and higher interest rates coming in the late 1980s, "we are becoming the world's largest banana republic." And who will benefit politically? "The chickens are going to come home to roost, and when they do, it is only the people of this party who will put this country back on the road to realism." Maybe Nordhaus is right about the economy, but his doomsaying won't prompt Democrats to do more than plan to take charge in the next depression.

They are also cautiously sanguine about mobilizing a mammoth voting bloc of 20 million or so that was only recently discovered. You've heard of blue-collar voters; these are "new collars." You've heard of Yuppies; these are "Yuppies' cousins." They are, according to Ralph Whitehead Jr. of the University of Massachusetts, "the Middle Americans of the generation under the age of 45." Their fathers and mothers were factory hands; "the new collars are the workhorses of the service economy." They earn less than Yuppies (between $20,000 and $40,000 a year) and, according to Whitehead, "swing much less weight in the workplace, and experience a lot more economic uncertainty." Most promising of all, they "are best described as de-aligned—or even more precisely, many of them never got aligned with a party in the first place."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whitehead was enthusiastically received at the policy commission. He was a bit fuzzy as to how this new voting bloc had eluded demographers and pollsters and strategists for so long. But no matter. "These people can be to the eighties and nineties what the blue-collar workers were to the forties and fifties," he said. "There is daylight in America for Democrats," the commission was told. "But we've got to run for it."

Run where? Whitehead says new collars live in the city, the suburbs, and the country. Far from a solid voting bloc ready to be mobilized as Democrats, they are amorphous, as meaningless in political terms as was Richard Nixon's Silent Majority. And even if one party could grab them, why would it be the Democrats? After all, the new collars went for Reagan by two to one in 1984. "There's no particular reason to believe these downscale baby boomers are likely to be Democrats," says Greg Schneiders, a Democratic consultant. "By and large, they are Republicans. There simply isn't a hidden Democratic base out there just waiting to be found by some Democratic Stanley who approaches and says, 'New collars, I presume.' "

AN ALTERNATIVE to these panaceas is retooling the party's ideology. The Democrats' majority complex argues against this, but it has not kept them from tinkering with their economic dogma. It's as if Gary Hart had won the 1984 nomination; post-New Deal domestic thinking is in. Nearly every Democrat talks about growth and cutting deficits and tax reform. "Tax simplification is a Democratic idea introduced three years ago by a guy named Bill Bradley and don't forget it," says Mark A. Siegel, a member of the Democratic National Committee. Democratic liberals in Congress are now willing to cut some social spending, and they aren't advocating vast new programs; national health insurance hasn't been an issue among Democrats since 1980.

The rub comes on foreign policy. "Democrats are going to have a harder time sorting out their foreign policy persona than their domestic policy one," says Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute. Moderately hawkish Democrats have become armed services committee chairmen in Congress—Sam Nunn in the Senate and Les Aspin in the House—but the party has not followed. A majority of Democrats in Congress opposed funds for the Nicaraguan *contras* and Cambodian rebels and voted against lifting the Clark Amendment, which barred U.S. aid to anticommunist insurgents in Angola. The Democratic Party may not be isolationist and anti-defense, but its opposition to Reaganite internationalism without proposing any clear alternative has at least created the impression that it is.

Aspin sought to persuade the policy commission that the party must erase its image of being "against anything having to do with defense." He said this perception was "out of sync with reality," but the qualifier didn't mollify his audience. He evoked angry stares and gritted teeth, and inspired an attack in *The Washington Post* by columnist Mary McGrory. Aspin insisted that Democrats need to be "for something" in defense, and that the American people want both a commitment to curbing nuclear weapons and a tough response to the Soviet threat. Democrats have embraced the first, he pointed out, and Republicans the second. The party that offers both will win the presidency in 1988. The commission wasn't interested.

DON'T BLAME Paul Kirk, the Democratic national chairman, for the persistence of the majority complex. He is responsible for establishing the policy commission, but he's also done everything within his limited power to shake up the party. No one expected Kirk, a mild-mannered liberal who spent a decade in the service of Teddy Kennedy, to move so swiftly and boldly. Remember how Walter Mondale refused to stand up last year to Jesse Jackson's interest group politicking? Kirk's aim is to create a party reflecting the national interest, not that of any single group. Over Jackson's objections, Kirk blocked the national committee's black caucus from appointing its choice as party vice chairman, and he rejected Jackson's choice—former Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson—to head the Fairness Commission, which is reexamining the presidential delegate selection rules. "It didn't seem reasonable to me for him to designate someone," explains Kirk matter-of-factly.

What's more, in hopes of expunging the party's interest group stain, he eliminated the constituency caucuses (gay/lesbian, black, etc.) as official bodies of the DNC. "Those who have a particular agenda," Kirk says firmly, "have to realize that no particular agenda is going to succeed 100 percent, and if we continue to lose elections, they are not going to succeed at all." He also abolished the midterm party convention, first started in 1974 and always a forum for nasty ideological squabbling. He told labor leaders that they shouldn't mass behind a single Democratic presidential contender early on in the 1988 race (AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland didn't take kindly to this advice). And he restructured the party's headquarters to stress service to Democratic candidates, not bureaucratic chores in Washington.

Kirk's most lasting contribution is the least ballyhooed. He chose Don Fowler, a wise moderate from South Carolina, to head the Fairness Commission, and instructed him to wind up business by the end of 1985. Yes, that's 1985; no more years of tugging and pulling over delegate rules. Overhauling the rules every four years, Kirk concluded, is a cure worse than the disease. Fowler's agenda is clear: make as few changes as possible. Only three are certain. The threshold for gaining delegates in a primary will be lowered from 20 percent (probably to 15 percent), the selection of elected officials as automatic delegates will be delayed in the primary season, and DNC members will be given delegate spots. Jesse Jackson may long for sweeping rules changes, but Kirk has already gone eyeball-to-eyeball with him, and it was Jack-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Little Men On Campus

WHEN the president of College Republicans, Jack Abramoff, invited his counterpart at College Democrats, Steve Gersky, to tour the country and debate the issues of the 1984 presidential campaign, Gersky cordially accepted. The Republicans even paid for the tour. But they also chose campuses where they would get a friendly reception, did not tell Gersky where he would be appearing each day, and piped in canned applause whenever Abramoff spoke. Bill Belk, the outgoing president of Young Democrats, says mournfully: "They set him up."

The story Belk tells is one example of a long series of humiliations suffered by the Democrats in the 1984 campaign. It also reveals one of the party's ongoing strategic errors. Eight months after Reagan's landslide victory among younger voters, the Democrats still talk vaguely about recasting the party's image, while the Republicans and allied conservative groups continue to pump millions of dollars into conservative college organizations. Their goal is not only to win the college vote, but to secure an entire generation of voters.

The Republican Party has had phenomenal success in using college campuses as training grounds for future foot soldiers. Its secret: a combination of old-fashioned, aggressive organizing and imaginative new ways of putting college students to work.

The party is informally aided by a number of lavishly funded conservative organizations that actively recruit future Republican leaders at colleges. Bankrolled by conservative millionaires—most notably biermeister Joseph Coors and Nixon treasury secretary William Simon—these groups have set up dozens of college newspapers. They have sent young believers to spread the gospel in Central America. (Richard Mathias of the Georgetown University chapter of Young Americans for Freedom publicly endorsed Roberto d'Aubuisson on Salvadoran TV in February 1984, calling him a victim of disinformation in the liberal American media.) And, as Fred Clarkson reveals in a recent issue of the *Interchange Report* (a journal published by an organization that monitors the right wing), new right and neoconservative groups have established old-boy networks that directly siphon young politicos into the Reagan administration and young journalists and academics into places like *The Wall Street Journal* and the Heritage Foundation. Steve Kelly, formerly of the *Dartmouth Review*, is now a nationally syndicated cartoonist for the *San Diego Union*; former *Review* editors Peter Robinson and Bill Cattan now serve as speech writers for Reagan and Bush respectively.

The most prominent tool in the "war of ideas," as the success of the *Dartmouth Review* editors show, has been the conservative campus newspaper. The Institute for Educational Affairs, a conservative corporate philanthropy group founded by Simon and Irving Kristol, provides grants ranging from $1,000 to $15,000 and more to about 70 conservative papers, according to the *Interchange Report*. Though these publications were ostensibly started on campuses to combat a liberal orthodoxy, in many cases the conservative journal is the only forceful voice to be heard. Ann Lewis, national director of Americans for Democratic Action, says that the lack of a liberal voice has allowed conservatives to argue successfully that liberalism is outmoded and that equality and growth are incompatible. "They have rewritten history," she groans.

The Institute spends about $200,000 a year on a program that trains and promotes young conservative writers. Jeffry Dodt of the United States Business Industrial Council in Tennessee says his group spent $335,000 last year on conservative youth programs. The budget included money to bring foreign conservative journalists, academics, and businessmen to campuses here, and to fund conservative papers at more than two dozen schools, including Columbia, Princeton, and Harvard Universities. The council has started student publications at ten universities since 1982.

The Democrats, meanwhile, spend practically nothing on campus political activities and have no organization to speak of. Gary Hart and Jesse Jackson actively—and successfully—cultivated the youth vote during the campaign, but after they faded, so did their efforts to win over college students. Democratic National Committee spokesman Terry Michael says the party can't spare the resources, and is more interested in tackling the larger Democratic malaise. "We're in a kind of a ground-zero situation. Until we deal with that larger problem, I'm not sure what those organizational efforts [on the campuses] are going to mean."

Clearly the lack of funding for Democratic and liberal groups makes it difficult to compete with the heavily financed conservatives, but Democratic youth organizers correctly point out that the party does not understand the importance of the youth vote. Meanwhile, the once-formidable Democratic youth organization tends to attract those who are more concerned about launching their own careers than working to revive the party. "The state of Young Democrats and College Young Democrats is ridiculous," says one organizer. "It's a playground for young, ambitious students who want to be politicians."

Only one group seems to recognize the magnitude of the Republicans' success on the campuses. The Americans for Democratic Action, Lewis says, has budgeted $150,000 for a new fellowship that will bring students to Washington to learn about the political process and for a liberal speakers program aimed at college students. The sum is far more than the ADA has ever spent on college programs, but a fraction of the millions spent by the Republicans.

Republican organizers say that the goal of the conservative organizing is a fundamental change at all levels of the public-policymaking process, from the campuses where opinions are most easily shaped, to academia, to the media, to the administration. The movement, oddly enough, is based on one of the fundamental doctrines of Leninism: a few committed men can shape a lot of uncommitted minds. The Democrats, even more oddly, act on the fundamental laissez-faire impulse of conservatism: if you do nothing, everything will take care of itself.

MICHAEL HIRSCHORN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son who blinked. "There's no way Jesse Jackson could hold the Democratic Party hostage anymore," says Ornstein.

All that sounds great, and it is. But the influence of a party chairman is not boundless. Restructuring the Democratic Party organization is one thing. Reinvigorating the party is something else altogether. This didn't happen to the Republicans until the late 1970s, when their majority complex had long since vanished. The Democrats still have a ways to go.

FRED BARNES

How the White House got hooked.

REAGAN'S SECRET QUOTAS

BY JEREMY RABKIN

AFFIRMATIVE action and racial preference schemes have provoked sharp debate ever since they became a part of federal civil rights policy. Fifteen years later the miseries of the urban ghettos remain as intractable as they were in the late 1960s. Yet we have not descended into racial polarization or ethnic tribalism. Federal civil rights agencies expanded the list of specially protected or preferred minority groups in the early 1970s to embrace "Hispanic" (or "Spanish-surnamed") Americans, "Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders," "Native Americans," and women. But the expansion did stop there and we have been spared the spectacle of, say, Greeks and Italians fighting over the distribution of spoils to "Mediterrano-Americans."

Proponents of affirmative action can still claim that it has launched many individuals on successful careers they otherwise would not have dared to attempt. On the other hand, the social costs have been considerable, even if not so fearful as once imagined. The most serious cost has been to our national principles and ideals.

Preferential treatment policies simply cannot be reconciled with the principle of judging individuals by their individual merits. Of course, "merit" is a variable and ambiguous term, and assessments of individual merits are mingled with consideration of seemingly extraneous characteristics—residency or geographic origin, family connections, athletic ability, good looks, and so on. But most of these considerations are as variable as the definitions of "merit" for particular positions: athletic skills or a family name that help a candidate in applying to a particular college may hurt in a subsequent job interview and be altogether irrelevant in luring investors for a business venture. Racial or ethnic classifications have always seemed particularly odious precisely because they are so readily adapted to a broad social caste system, reappearing in one institution after another, trapping individuals in their assigned groups. For this reason, the ideal of a "color-blind constitution"—and more generally of a society indifferent to race—has always been closely associated with the principle of judging individuals on their personal merits.

Even the staunchest advocates of affirmative action acknowledge this as the ideal we should aim for—eventually. They can point to plausible reasons for compromise or delay in moving to a system of total color blindness. But one of the effects of affirmative action is that we no longer seriously question the justification or the extent of particular deviations from our principles. We now invoke racial and ethnic classifications as a matter of routine, as initial impulse rather than last resort.

This is partly because we have stretched the notion of "discrimination" to the point where it seems worth pursuing to illogical extremes. The government first began systematically collecting racial data in the mid-1960s, in order to monitor school desegregation efforts in the South. This made sense when racist demagogues were still doing their best to block integration. Racial and ethnic data demands were then quickly extended to schools in the North, to higher education, to private employment, and to other fields. In fact, federal regulations and judicial holdings in an astonishing range of circumstances have established that "unbalanced" statistics are enough to trigger charges of discrimination and demands for "remedial action"—usually meaning quotas of one kind or another.

In some cases, the demand for equal statistical results has been carried to obsessive lengths. In 1980, for example, a federal judge held that the public schools in Kingston, New York, were imposing disciplinary sanctions on black students to a disproportionate extent. He ordered the school system to adopt procedures to ensure that henceforth black and white students would be subject to disciplinary sanctions in precisely proportionate numbers. The Education Department's Office for Civil Rights has

Jeremy Rabkin is assistant professor of government at Cornell University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been collecting racial and ethnic data on student discipline since the mid-1970s, when it warned school districts that no proof of malicious intent or differential treatment would be required to hold racial disproportions in this area "discriminatory." The policy has not been changed under the Reagan administration.

Nor has the Education Department changed its regulations defining as "discriminatory" any school tracking program that fails to advance blacks and whites in close statistical proportions. Last spring the department charged several school districts in South Carolina with "discrimination" for maintaining an unbalanced racial distribution of students among different level classes in certain subjects. The students had been assigned on the basis of performance on nationally standardized tests, but the department said that their "effect" made them "discriminatory" in these districts.

IT IS HARD to imagine that loosening school discipline and undermining academic standards is helping minority students. In fact, as federal civil rights regulation intensified in the 1970s, the gap between average black and white scholastic attainments—as measured by standardized tests like the SAT—actually increased. But federal bureaucrats find it difficult to shake off their preoccupation with "balanced" statistical results. Thus the Reagan Education Department, for all of its ballyhooed concern about restoring educational excellence, has done nothing to change the more perverse regulations on educational "discrimination." Harry Singleton, assistant secretary of education for civil rights, conceded in an interview last fall that such policies "may need some rethinking," but there has been no sign of willingness to change existing regulations.

The entrenchment of preferential treatment policies is most evident in the administration's failure to change the government's own affirmative action programs. The Reagan Justice Department has raised hackles among civil rights leaders for championing the claims of white males in a number of major reverse discrimination cases. In recent months it has also challenged explicit employment quotas in municipal services around the country. But controversy over Justice Department initiatives in the courts has obscured the fact that within the administration the views of the Justice Department have had little visible impact on established programs and policies. The best example is the Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), which runs the program that, probably more than any other, established the phrase "affirmative action" in popular usage—and persuaded most people that the phrase was simply a euphemism for quotas.

The program derives from an executive order issued by President Johnson in 1965. The order requires firms doing work for the federal government to undertake "affirmative action" to ensure they do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or national origin. In the early 1970s the Labor Department began interpreting this to mean that all government contractors must develop detailed "affirmative action plans," setting out "goals" and "timetables" for the hiring and promotion of minorities and women, wherever these groups constituted a smaller proportion of a contracting firm's own work force than of its "available labor pool." In 1982 Ellen Shong, the Reagan-appointed OFCCP director, conceded that enforcement practices in this program had often resulted in "preferential treatment" of minorities and women because "goals have sometimes been applied as if they were the same thing as quotas." Under Shong's direction, OFCCP relaxed its enforcement demands somewhat, allowing contractors, for example, to set ultimate employment goals for minorities and women at only 80 percent of their local market "availability."

Even so, to identify these goals with "nondiscrimination," as the Labor Department urges, one must swallow a whole series of fantastic assumptions: that notoriously unreliable "availability" data are even 80 percent accurate, that "available" workers in any particular category are interchangeable in their personal merits and qualifications, that minorities and women would "normally" be distributed in almost exactly the same proportions in each firm in a nondiscriminatory world.

There may be circumstances in which such heavy-handed approaches are justifiable or at least expedient. The prototype of this program, the 1969 "Philadelphia Plan" for construction contractors, sought numerical hiring commitments in an industry with a history of blatant discrimination and the potential to absorb a great many unskilled minority workers. But the most striking aspect of the program since the early 1970s has been its indiscriminate demand for "goals" and "timetables" from contractors of all kinds. Universities and think tanks, firms with distinguished records of tolerance and civic concern, firms in aging, low-growth industries all have been subjected to the same cumbersome exercise of affirmative action planning. Several economists reported at a recent hearing of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that, so far as they could determine, the program has increased the demand—hence salaries and promotions—for highly educated and trained minorities and women, but that it has had relatively little effect on the employment of unskilled workers. In other words, it has done most for those least in need of government help, but best situated to exploit it.

STILL, the Reagan administration has not dared to change the formal regulations and official guidelines governing this program, much less to challenge its underlying assumptions. Indeed, all agencies and departments of the federal government continue to draw up affirmative action plans, complete with goals and timetables, for their own employees, under the direction of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Justice Department has refused to cooperate, maintaining that the EEOC has no legal authority to impose racial and ethnic hiring goals on federal employment. But only the Federal Trade Commission and the National Endowment for the Humanities have followed the legal judgment or the example of the Justice Department. For its part, the EEOC has raised

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

questions about relaxed enforcement standards at the Labor Department's contract compliance program and has actively encouraged firms not doing business with the federal government to develop their own affirmative action plans, "voluntarily."

Some people indulge preferential treatment with genial paternalism—of the sort that used to be associated with "Hire the Handicapped!" campaigns, but which organizations of the disabled now protest as patronizing. Other people doubtless view such programs with the sort of cynical resignation that taxpayers develop toward special interest subsidy programs in the welfare state. Probably the main reason the administration has not made more of an effort to challenge the programs is that they remain prominent symbols of concern for the "disadvantaged." And with all the criticism it has received for budget cuts in programs for the poor, these regulatory programs must look to White House officials like particularly cheap symbols of concern.

But this is precisely the wrong sort of symbolism. It does not treat the unemployed or the ill-educated as legitimate objects of public compassion. Instead, it suggests that a black or a Hispanic or an Asian—or a woman—is a person to be pitied and treated with special tenderness. If the beneficiaries of such patronizing treatment do not often protest the indignity of it, that may be another sign of its corrupting effects. For many, one suspects, self-interest conquers pride. Some respond to the psychological strains of their protected status by insisting all the more indignantly on the virulence of racism and bigotry in America, thus perpetuating a vicious circle of self-deception.

THE MOST CANDID and sophisticated defenders of preferential treatment make arguments that come dismayingly close to the claim that being born into a minority group is a status to be pitied. They are fighting not so much the persistence of bigotry and direct discrimination today, they say, as the legacy of past oppression, the enduring effects of past discrimination on the descendants of the victims. Once a slave, always a slave. Where does it end? On this rationale, no level of personal attainment seems sufficient for an individual to escape the burden of his ancestry. Even the most prosperous member of a minority, after all, might have achieved more but for the "effects of past discrimination." Why not, then, quotas for capitalists? In fact, this reductio ad absurdum is now becoming official policy under the Reagan administration.

Since the early 1970s, for example, the Federal Communications Commission has been awarding "preference points" to license applications from companies with at least partial minority ownership. Usually the "scoring" of license applications is so complex and ambiguous that the minority preference is not clearly decisive. At the end of 1982, however, the FCC decided to award an FM broadcasting license in upper Michigan to a company owned by a black woman, while accepting the findings of its own hearing examiners that a rival applicant had superior merit—by the FCC's arcane scoring system—in every other respect.

The commission found the race of the black owner decisive, even though the area to be served by this broadcaster had almost no black residents in its potential audience. The notion that black station owners would provide notably different programming than whites seems improbable in any case, given the nature of this competitive industry. In fact, under existing rules, a black investor who uses his race to secure a broadcasting license may turn around and sell it to a white owner without an apology or explanation to the FCC. But this naked racial preference scheme has never been challenged by the Reagan Justice Department, nor has it been questioned by the D.C. Court of Appeals. Everyone seems to think it is just a nice gesture to minority individuals who are well-heeled enough to think about buying a broadcasting station.

This is only a small gesture, however. The Reagan administration has sought to promote racial and ethnic patronage on a wholesale basis by channeling fixed percentages of government contracts to minority-owned businesses. Under a 1983 executive order, each federal agency and department is assigned an annual "procurement objective" specifying the portion of its contracts to be awarded to "minority businesses." The agencies and departments are also required to see to it that their remaining contractors in turn award a specified portion of their subcontracts to "minority businesses."

The authority to dispense with normal competitive bidding in government contracting derives from a 1978 amendment to the Small Business Administration Act, which speaks of "business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals." The Commerce Department, which oversees the program, has decreed that any member of the specially protected minority groups may be presumed to be "socially and economically disadvantaged." The program has been riddled with corruption, with minority "businessmen" fronting for a variety of firms seeking preferred access to federal contracts. (See "The Set-Aside Scam" by Michael Oreskes, December 24, 1984.)

WHAT'S MORE, quotas for minority businessmen do not assure greater employment opportunities for the unemployed or the marginally employed in minority neighborhoods. Special employment policies are not a condition of eligibility for the program, nor is it even necessary to operate in depressed neighborhoods to receive preference for contracts. More than anything else, the program seems geared to promoting new leadership elements in minority communities, people who will be grateful for Republican patronage and inclined, perhaps, to put in some good words for Republican candidates or the Republican administration. Some White House officials have been quite open about the partisan dividends they hope to see the program deliver.

Perhaps the Reagan administration feels it has earned the right to wring what partisan advantage it can from the pattern of racial and ethnic spoils established in the 1970s. It expended a good deal of political capital to reconstitute

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights with an anti-quota majority. It allowed William Bradford Reynolds, as assistant attorney general for civil rights, to argue traditional civil rights principles in the courts. In this it provoked more resentment than applause as attested by the short shrift that Reynolds's nomination for a higher position recently received in the Senate Judiciary Committee. But one still has to ask why there is so little political support for the reassertion of color blindness in national policy.

One reason is that the Supreme Court, on which we usually rely to assert basic principles against the tides of political fashion and expediency, has been overcome with expediential considerations of its own on this issue. It has waffled and winked at quota schemes for the past 15 years. The constitutional scholars and constitutional advocacy organizations, on whom we often rely to keep the Court honest, also have been derelict. Organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union have no difficulty recognizing a single crèche on public property as a threat to constitutional integrity, but have swallowed racial allocation schemes and the baroque apparatus of affirmative action as a necessary social endeavor. When the champions of constitutional principle have deserted the fray or defected to the other side, the banner of principle doesn't inspire courage in politicians.

But there is a more fundamental difficulty. Attacks on quota schemes are routinely expressed as complaints about "reverse discrimination," the victimization of white males. But everyone knows that on the average whites are far better off than blacks or Hispanics and that men still earn considerably more than women. Thus it seems rather petty to cry over the injustice to white males in affirmative action. In fact, although the individual Allen Bakke or Brian Weber has suffered a direct injustice here or there, quotas and preferential treatment programs have not presented any sustained or large-scale threat to the economic or social dominance of white males. Opinion polls may show, then, that most people still support the principle of judging individuals on their merits and disapprove of racial and ethnic preference programs. But there is no enraged, grass-roots demand for eliminating such programs, no vast constituency to embolden politicians to take on the impassioned defenders of such programs. There is, after all, no great threat to the dominant groups in this country if public policy encourages demeaning, stereotypical thinking about blacks or Hispanics or women.

How the CIA masterminds the Nicaraguan insurgency.

CONFESSIONS OF A 'CONTRA'

BY EDGAR CHAMORRO WITH JEFFERSON MORLEY

Miami

ON DECEMBER 7, 1982, I met with five Nicaraguans and two Americans in an executive suite at the Four Ambassadors Hotel in downtown Miami to rehearse for a press conference we would be holding the next day. The Nicaraguans were prominent (and in my case not so prominent) opponents of the Somoza and Sandinista regimes who were to be introduced as directors of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), that is, the *contras*. The Americans were CIA agents. The one in charge, known to us as Tony Feldman, was accompanied by Thomas Castillo, one of his several assistants. They wanted to make sure we said the right things in our first joint public appearance.

Feldman introduced two lawyers from Washington who briefed us on the Neutrality Act, the American law prohibiting private citizens from waging war on another country from U.S. territory. Feldman was worried we were going to tell the press that we were trying to overthrow the Sandinistas, which, of course, is exactly what we wanted to do. He emphasized that we should say instead that we were trying to "create conditions for democracy." After the briefing we asked each other the questions we were likely to face in the morning.

"Where have you been getting money?" someone asked.

"Say your sources want to remain confidential," Feldman advised—a truthful and very clever answer.

"Have you had any contact with U.S. government officials?"

The CIA men agreed there was no way to finesse this one. We simply had to lie and say, "No." We practiced like this for three hours.

The press conference, held in Fort Lauderdale to avoid the risk of demonstrations in Miami, was all very solemn and pompous. We filed into the Hilton Conference Center one at a time, as if we were a government taking power;

Edgar Chamorro served as a director of the anti-Sandinista rebel organization, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, from 1982 to 1984. He now lives in Key Biscayne, Florida.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the only thing missing was the music. Then I read our statement of principles and goals.

"We the Directorate of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force," I declared, "commit ourselves to guide and support this effort of the Nicaraguan people to salvage our sacred patriotic honor, offering for this purpose all-out industry, dedication, and if necessary, our very lives." I felt some remorse reciting these words. Our original text had made no such offer, but the CIA men had thrown that version out. A young man named George (I never learned his last name) had been called in from Washington to rewrite our statement, and it was he who bravely offered up our lives.

The seven of us who later took questions from reporters had never worked together. Previously, the *contras* had been primarily a military movement, led by former Somoza National Guardsmen, that skirmished with the Sandinista army on the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. These forces were trained and advised by Argentine military officers. We civilians had been active in anti-Sandinista activities in the U.S., but had no formal connection to the military commanders. The CIA had brought the groups together with money and unequivocal promises of support.

I hadn't even met Enrique Bermudez, the former National Guardsman who commanded the *contra* troops in Honduras, until the rehearsal the day before. Alfonso Callejas, a former vice president of Nicaragua who broke with Somoza in 1972 and who lived in Texas, had only arrived that morning. He came to the press conference straight from the airport. We told him, "You weren't at the rehearsal, so don't say anything." He spoke anyway, but we managed to keep his answers short, and he didn't do much damage.

There were some unavoidable contradictions in our answers. On the one hand, we were careful to say that we had great admiration for, but no formal connection with, the freedom fighters battling the Sandinista army on the Honduran border. On the other hand, we claimed that the directorate would put the *contra* forces under civilian control. But overall we thought we made a good impression, and when I met Thomas Castillo again that night, he said he was pleased. We returned to Miami, and I began my two years as a *contra*.

I CAME TO Nicaraguan politics late, especially considering my background. After Somoza, my family name is perhaps the best known in Nicaragua; four Chamorros served as president of Nicaragua in the 19th and early 20th centuries. My family led the Conservative Party, for decades the major opposition to Somoza's Liberal Party. My father, like many of my relatives, was persecuted and jailed several times by Somoza. I, however, preferred education to politics, joining the Jesuits in 1950 at age 19. I went on to become a priest and a teacher, studying at different times at the Catholic University in Ecuador, at St. Louis University, and at Marquette, and later becoming a full professor and dean of the School of Humanities at the University of Central America. Even after leaving the priesthood in 1969, I continued studying, earning a master's degree from Harvard University in 1972.

For me the Sandinista revolution began with the earthquake that devastated Managua in 1972. We learned that large buildings, thought to be indestructible, could become rubble in minutes. Still, I was not very involved in politics. In Managua I founded my own advertising agency, Creative Publicity, and handled accounts for businesses owned by people in my family, including the local General Motors and Toyota dealers, and Toña, Nicaragua's most popular beer. My only political venture was to accept a one-year appointment in 1977 to the Nicaraguan Mission to the United Nations. (Under Somoza, members of the opposition Conservative Party, to which I nominally belonged, were given non-essential government posts.) The most political thing I did there was secretly pass a message from Sandinista friends to U.S. Ambassador Andrew Young in October 1977 asking him to denounce Somoza. He never did.

As the insurrection against Somoza grew in 1978, I helped out in other small ways. When my close friend Sergio Ramirez, now Daniel Ortega's vice president, was being hunted by the National Guard, I hid him in my children's bedroom. But in 1979 the growing chaos in Managua made me fear for my family's safety. Somoza's planes were bombing the barrios near my house and desperate National Guardsmen were shooting innocent people on the street. On June 17, a month before Somoza was overthrown, my wife and I and our two children came to Miami.

I returned in September 1979 to see if things had calmed down enough for us to return. I traveled to the south to visit an uncle and to attend a ceremony in which the Sandinista national leadership turned over power to local authorities. Many of the leaders of the revolution were there: Daniel Ortega, Ramirez, Violeta Chamorro, the widow of my distant cousin Pedro Joacquin Chamorro, the anti-Somoza editor of *La Prensa* who was assassinated in 1978. Talking with people at the big picnic held after the ceremony, I could see that Castro was in control of the revolution—not as a manipulator but as the only available role model. Even the less fanatic people like Violeta were outspoken that day. "On to El Salvador!" she cried. I didn't want to oppose them. I believed the spirit behind the revolution was authentic and true. But I knew if I joined them my life would would be in the hands of the culture of the revolution. I wished them well. Perhaps if I had been younger and single, I would have joined their cause.

BACK IN MIAMI, I continued meeting informally every two weeks or so with other Nicaraguan exiles. Most of them, like me, were from the Conservative Party, and favored social change without going so far as the revolutionary transformation favored by the Sandinistas.

Our group became more formal in late 1980 when Francisco Cardenal, an engineer who had been a high-ranking Sandinista, left Nicaragua and joined us in Miami. We

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

named ourselves the *Union Democratica Nicaraguense*, but we limited ourselves to activities such as writing letters to members of Congress urging them to cut off aid to the Sandinistas. By this time Cardenal was receiving money from the CIA. He often traveled to Washington to meet with people from the Agency and the State Department, and to Honduras to establish contact with the former National Guardsmen.

AS THE SANDINISTAS grew more repressive in 1980, many of us became convinced that they had to be replaced, and that only armed opposition could do it. The Sandinistas had gone too far in imitating Cuba, in chanting slogans that had no bearing on the situation in Nicaragua. Finally, the assassination of Jorge Salazar in November 1980 made it clear that the Sandinistas would not tolerate any serious political opposition. Salazar had been a popular spokesman and a brave leader, organizing coffee and cattle producers into independent cooperatives. We had not wanted to believe they would be so dictatorial as to kill him.

In August 1981 our group sent a representative to an important meeting in Guatemala with U.S. officials, the National Guardsmen, and their Argentine military advisers. Did we want to merge our efforts? The question sparked long debates in the exile community in Miami. I remember arguing long into the night that we should accept this alliance. I said—mistakenly, it turned out—that the Somoza National Guardsmen were professional soldiers and not necessarily bad guys. Besides, I pointed out, we didn't have the capacity to train a fighting force, and we had to work with people who did. The others responded by telling stories of being unfairly arrested, beaten, or robbed by the National Guard. They insisted that anyone associated with the National Guard had done so much damage to Nicaragua that we should never, never work with them. Despite these objections, we joined our efforts with those of the *contras* in Honduras.

Cardenal, along with another civilian and Enrique Bermudez, became the directorate of the *contras*. Cardenal immediately clashed with the military commanders. He was very nationalistic, very strong-minded, and he had a tremendous dislike for the National Guard. He expected civilians to be in charge, and he prematurely tried to control the military leadership. For his efforts, he was expelled from Honduras by Bermudez in September 1982.

Plotting against the Sandinistas was not a full-time job for me. In November 1982 I was working as a commodities broker for Cargill when I received a totally unexpected phone call from an American who called himself Steve Davis. "I am speaking in the name of the government of the United States," he said in a voice accustomed to giving orders. He asked to see me that day. Over lunch at a restaurant near my house in Key Biscayne, Davis told me that Cardenal had been fighting too much with National Guardsmen, and that the United States wanted to increase the size of the *contras*' political leadership.

I told him that I favored creating something like a *contra* congress, composed of perhaps 21 leading Nicaraguans. This would have several advantages, I explained. First, it could create more debate, allow more participation by civilians, and possibly open avenues to the Sandinistas. Second, it could include representatives from the other rebel groups such as the one led by former Sandinista hero Eden Pastora, who shunned any contact with National Guardsmen. Third, one military commander could not defy or challenge 20 other important people. Fourth, and most important, I wanted to establish the supremacy of laws, not leaders, within the Nicaraguan opposition. I wanted to have a written constitution and formal procedures that would prevent us from succumbing to the perennial Latin American weakness for the caudillo.

Davis liked my proposal. But even at this first meeting I noticed a distinctive trait of CIA agents: they immediately reinforce what you have to say. "Well, yes," they respond, "we completely agree." Davis knew my views, and knew he had to sound liberal. "We don't want anybody in the directorate who is Somocista, who has robbed money from Nicaragua, who has committed crimes," he claimed. He was overdoing it.

As Davis said good-bye, he told me that I wouldn't always see him, that sometimes others would call or visit me on his behalf. And in the days that followed other men did come. Their activities were somewhat mysterious. All of them were getting ready for the arrival of someone from Washington who wanted me to be a part of something and to share in the administration's plans with respect to Nicaragua.

FINALLY, in late November 1982, Davis asked me to have dinner in his suite at the Holiday Inn in downtown Miami. There I met the man who came from Washington—Tony Feldman. He was about 40 years old, alert and good-looking. He had thinning hair, a long face, an easy smile, and a gentleman's manner. He would have made a superb car salesman. He asked me to serve on a seven-member directorate of the FDN (anything larger would be unmanageable, they had decided). He promised this directorate would have the full backing of the United States government and that we would march into Managua by July 1983. When I said that struck me as very little time, he conceded that the victory might take until the end of the year.

I was glad to see that the Americans were committed enough to our cause to be taking such an active role, and I was flattered as well. I said yes. Over the next several days Feldman took control of the operation and moved the headquarters two blocks down to the less fancy Four Ambassadors, where we met constantly. The men from Washington wanted at all costs to have a woman on the directorate. What did I think of Lucia Salazar, Jorge Salazar's widow? I agreed that appointing her would be a good idea. They ran down the general qualities required for all the directors: must have been anti-Somocista; must have a reputation for honesty and not too much fondness for money; must be willing to move to Honduras and devote

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all their time to politics. They suggested names quickly, as if spontaneously. But I sensed that they had already decided whom they wanted. It was clear they didn't want Cardenal because he didn't get along with Bermudez. When Cardenal was not named to the new directorate, he quit politics altogether. He now sells life insurance in Miami.

Along the way my friends and I tried to raise the substantive issues that had concerned us all along. Knowing that Bermudez had forced Cardenal out of Honduras, we wanted assurances that we civilians would have authority over the military officers. Feldman and his assistants told me they wanted to dilute Bermudez's power with a larger directorate, to kick him upstairs. I also wanted Nicaraguans to approve the budget and control the money. Feldman agreed to this in principle, but said we would work out the details later. I also asked for a clear definition of what our goals were and what the Americans' goals were. This I never received.

We didn't discuss these things in great detail. The most important thing Feldman said repeatedly was that the CIA had to put together a group of Nicaraguans—non-Somocistas—before Congress voted on the Boland Amendment prohibiting U.S. aid to forces fighting to overthrow the Sandinistas. He emphasized that we had to go public quickly in order to get Congress to ease its position.

So we moved on to cosmetic issues. Some other Nicaraguan exiles working with me wrote the statement for the press conference. It was mostly about the right to private property, and it was very anticommunist. Thomas Castillo was sitting at the conference table in the suite at the Four Ambassadors when he read it. "Shit, who wrote this?" he said, shaking his head. "It sounds like all you want is to get back what you lost. You have to write something more progressive, more political. We'll get someone from Washington to help you." That's when George was called in. My friends who worked with him told me later that he insisted they rewrite everything to make it more socialistic. The Americans, I began to realize, liked to make all the crucial decisions.

MY DOUBTS, though, were still relatively minor. I was convinced the Sandinistas had to be thrown out. All along I had said we had to see how serious the Americans were about helping us, and the only way to do that was to play by their rules. So I quit my job at Cargill and devoted myself full-time to the FDN. The CIA promised me a salary of $2,000 a month plus expenses and I was put in charge of public relations.

We wanted to set up highly visible headquarters in a shopping center or office building, but the CIA didn't like the idea. They said it would become a target for demonstrations or violence. They insisted that we take an elegant suite at the David Williams Hotel in Coral Gables, which they paid for. The directors met there to draw up work plans. The CIA men sat by, with their yellow legal pads, writing down whatever we said we needed.

The FDN's first public relations coup was not my doing. It originated, I think, with Feldman's superiors in Washington. The idea was to put out a 12-point peace initiative—a move I thought was premature given the fact that we had launched our war initiative only a month before. But on January 13, 1983, we released the initiative, which essentially demanded the surrender of the Sandinista government. I asked why we were doing all this.

"This is 90 percent propaganda," Castillo explained. He suggested I write a letter to the Socialist International asking to be invited to explain the initiative at its upcoming annual meeting. "There's no way they will invite you, but it will give the FDN lots of publicity. It'll be news." So I signed the letters to the Socialist International.

In March 1983, while Bermudez and I were in Honduras, the other five directors spent a month presenting the case for the *contras* to politicians and reporters in Europe. Adolfo Calero, a former Coca-Cola distributor in Managua and increasingly the most powerful civilian on the directorate, and Indalecio Rodriguez, a former rector of the University of Central America, did a good job of winning support in Germany and Spain.

Unfortunately the other three directors mostly enjoyed the $5,000 in expense money that the CIA had given each of them. Lucia Salazar, Alfonso Callejas, and Marco Zeledon, a prominent Nicaraguan businessman, sometimes treated the trip as a free vacation, courtesy of the American taxpayer. Zeledon, Salazar, and Callejas missed their planes and appointments. The CIA man began to suspect hanky-panky. "Is Zeledon screwing Lucia?" one of them asked me one day after their return. "I don't know if he's screwing her," I told him, "but he's screwing you."

I MOVED TO Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, to run the *contras'* public relations office. With CIA money I hired several writers, reporters, and technicians to prepare a monthly bulletin called "*Comandos*," to run our radio station, and to write press releases. My friend George had been made deputy to the CIA station chief in Tegucigalpa, and he worked with me in our headquarters in a safe house.

Bermudez stayed in Honduras to command the *contra* troops, and Indalecio Rodriguez stayed to work with refugees fleeing Nicaragua. The other four directors worked out of Miami or Washington, mainly to lobby Congress. I sat in on meetings where the CIA men advised them how to win votes for continued CIA funding. The CIA men didn't have much respect for Congress. They said we could change how representatives voted as long as we knew how to "sell" our case and place them in a position of looking soft on communism. They suggested members whom we should lobby and gave us the names of big shots we should contact in their home districts.

I continued to press for some clear definition of what we were hoping to achieve and how specifically we were going to achieve it. Once we arrived in Honduras, Feldman's promise that we would be in Managua before the end of the year seemed to recede. The CIA station chief in Tegucigalpa spoke only of holding territory in the Isabelia

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mountain range, and pestering the Sandinista army so as to weaken it. I knew the CIA was talking with other anti-Sandinista groups in Miami and Central America, but they never put us together. And I don't think it was just political differences among the groups that blocked unification. If Bermudez and other National Guardsmen were the obstacle, the CIA could get rid of them. But I realized the CIA wanted to keep us apart. That way they didn't have to commit themselves to anyone. They were using us for their own purposes. Whatever their bigger plan was—defending the Monroe Doctrine or practicing "containment" or whatever—they were hiding it from us.

I SLOWLY got a sense of what the CIA's plans did not include as I attempted to improve the *contras'* image. Especially in my first year, it was standard *contra* practice to kill Sandinista prisoners and collaborators. In talking with officers in the *contra* camps along the Honduran borders, I frequently heard offhand remarks like, "Oh, I cut his throat." It was like stomping on a cockroach to them. So I admitted to the press that there had been executions. I said that they were not part of our policy, and that we had to train our men better. The CIA and Bermudez didn't like my candor, but in the long run it won credibility with the press, and I believe it had a positive influence in the conduct of the war.

I also established a program of political education for the soldiers. I printed up a little manual called the *Blue and White Book* that talked about the meaning of democracy, social justice, and so on. The soldiers could carry it with them at all times and educate themselves about what they were fighting for. The military commanders liked it but never understood the importance of it. I doubt if Bermudez ever read it.

The political dimension of the struggle meant nothing to the commanders. They all had the simplistic belief that Somoza lost because he had his hands tied by Jimmy Carter and that if he hadn't he could have killed a lot of people and won. The Argentine officers who trained them had told them, "We're the only people in Latin America who've beaten the communists in a war. The way to win is to fight a 'dirty war' like we did in the 1970s." I became convinced that the combination of Argentine training and National Guard mentality was one of the major obstacles to putting the *contra* movement on a truly democratic path.

Bermudez's best friend was Ricardo "Chino" Lau, who was one of the most notorious and brutal National Guardsmen under Somoza. Even months after Calero announced that Lau had resigned from the FDN, Lau was still the last person to talk to Bermudez at night and the first person to talk to him in the morning. Bermudez was even feared by his own officers. At one meeting of the directorate three of our top intelligence officers said they each suspected that Bermudez and Lau were plotting to kill them, and they asked us what we were going to do. There was nothing we could do. Bermudez, of course, denied it. But Bermudez demanded total loyalty and intimidated physically those who didn't provide it. Along with Calero and Calero's top aide, a civilian Somocista named Aristides Sanchez, Bermudez was unchallengeable. Privately, we referred to this threesome as the "Bermudez triangle."

Needless to say, the civilian directors of the *contras* did not gain control of the military. Despite Feldman's promise, we didn't even get complete control of the budget. It took six months just to get a Nicaraguan keeping the books. (One of the Argentines had been doing them up till then.) And even then we could only approve the budgets for troop supplies, for logistical goods such as gasoline and rented trucks, and for political efforts. We were never given the right to decide either how much we would spend on weapons or what kinds of weapons we wanted. I'm not sure the CIA even let Bermudez in on those decisions. And the civilians never had any say in military strategy. There was simply no mechanism for consultation. When I tried to raise the matter of civilian control with the CIA people, I was politely brushed aside. Their attitude was we were at the war stage of the struggle. Politics would come later.

The only time all seven *contra* directors came to Honduras was whenever Dewey Maroni, the chief of the project for the CIA, flew in. We first met with Maroni at one of our safe houses in Tegucigalpa in July 1983. He was a powerfully built man with a barrel chest and a Bronx accent. He smoked cigars and spoke with authority. As he sat among us, he reminded me of a proconsul come to tell his subjects what to do and how to do it. I have never witnessed such arrogance while working with a foreigner.

During his next visit in October 1983, Maroni proposed appointing a chairman of the directorate, an idea I favored. He started saying that this chairman should be able to work in Washington, not be Somocista, be known in Washington, and so on. It became obvious he was describing Calero. Calero was a politician who worked 16 hours a day and regarded the CIA as his constituency. We directors went into another room to vote. It was as easy as picking the color of Napoleon's white horse. When we came back in the room, Maroni shook Calero's hand. "Congratulations, Mr. President," he said. We had elected a chairman, and Maroni, in an unusual demonstration of the popular will, had immediately promoted him to president.

AT 2 A.M. on January 5, 1984, George woke me up at my safe house in Tegucigalpa and handed me a press release in excellent Spanish. I was surprised to read that we—the *contras*—were taking credit for having mined several Nicaraguan harbors. George told me to rush to our clandestine radio station and read this announcement before the Sandinistas broke the news. Of course, we played no role in the mining of the harbors. This was not unusual. The CIA often gave us credit (or perhaps blame) for operations that we knew nothing about. The CIA employed its team of "Latino assets" to bomb the Sandinistas' petroleum tanks at Punto Corinto in October 1983. When I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

protested to George, asking why the CIA didn't simply give us the money and let patriotic Nicaraguans do the job, he sighed, "This is the way they want us to do it in Washington."

Meanwhile our own operations were getting inadequate support. We had doubled the number of volunteers in our forces from 3,500 to 7,000 in 1983. But we had too few machine guns and airplanes, and too little logistical support when we operated inside Nicaraguan territory. Finally, in the summer we received two C-47 planes that the CIA had been promising for months. They had poor avionics and poor defense systems. They were practically flying coffins. I remember meeting with the CIA people at the Marriott Hotel in Rosslyn, Virginia, around this time. One director told me the CIA had prepared a "nice treat" for his visit to Washington: a tour of museums and restaurants. I said, "Don't forget to go to the Smithsonian, where you'll see a C-47 as old as the one that these gentlemen will give us someday."

I got the feeling the CIA didn't want to let us win. I thought we should try to capture a town, but the CIA said it was impossible. In a way they were right. People in Nicaragua still half believed that the Sandinistas were getting better. They weren't ready for another change. Our troops took the town of Ocotal once for a few hours, but the people didn't rejoice to see us. They just said, "Good, you killed that brutal Sandinista guy." They didn't speak out for the FDN, and our soldiers didn't know how to talk to them. This was the price we paid for not emphasizing democratic goals and not working as a constitutional movement. The Americans wanted an army they could control. They didn't want to risk an insurrection that was not under their control.

MY POSITION in the FDN was getting more precarious. The chain of events that ultimately led me to leave began around this time. In the fall of 1983 a CIA man known as John Kirkpatrick arrived in Honduras. Kirkpatrick was a character out of a Graham Greene novel. He was very critical of the top brass of the FDN and loved the lowest and poorest soldiers. He drank too much and cried all the time. He was excited by my political education work with our troops, and wanted to prepare a psychological warfare manual as well.

We worked a few hours a day for a week or two, then Kirkpatrick finished the manuscript with my secretary. When the manual came back from the printer, I discovered two passages that I thought were immoral and dangerous. One recommended hiring professional criminals. The other advocated killing our fellow *contras* to create martyrs for the cause. I didn't particularly want to be martyred by the CIA in its struggle against international communism. Besides, the assassination of Pedro Joacquin Chamorro and the terrible consequences of changing the destiny of a nation through political killing was fresh in my memory. I locked up all the copies of the manual and hired two youths to cut out the offending pages and glue in expurgated pages. I thought that was the end of the matter.

I saw Dewey Maroni for the last time on June 14, 1984, and found his views had changed. A year before he had praised Eden Pastora for his ability to inspire the peasantry. Now he said he had given up on Pastora, and he addressed himself fondly to Bermudez: "Well done, Colonel. Keep it up. Your boys are doing fine." I realized that it was all over for those of us who wanted to make the *contras* a democratic political movement. Shortly after that Calero told me I could no longer work in Honduras. I returned to Miami to work with the local FDN committee, but I learned that Calero had told FDN people not to invite me to any FDN functions.

In October 1984 a *New York Times* reporter obtained a copy of the original version of the psychological warfare manual, and the CIA and the Reagan administration were embarrassed by repugnant passages. Calero immediately concluded that I had told the *Times* about it (I hadn't) in order to defeat Reagan in the presidential election. We met one last time in Miami a week after the election. He called me a traitor and I called him a dictator. On November 20, 1984, I received a letter saying that the FDN directorate had unanimously agreed to relieve me of my duties.

I NOW BELIEVE that a political dialogue in Nicaragua should be the United States's top priority. We have tried military pressure, and it hasn't worked. It hasn't created the conditions for democracy and it hasn't forced the Sandinistas to negotiate. The first step toward national reconciliation must be abolition of the *contra* army. By urging the rebels to lay down their guns, the United States would strengthen the moderates and weaken the extremists on both sides. President Reagan should also lower his inflammatory rhetoric and give more than lip service to the Contadora peace initiative sponsored by Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama. Contadora still offers the best chance for achieving a lasting political solution.

When I joined the *contras* in December 1982, I thought the United States and the CIA wanted to restore the promise of the Sandinista revolution. Now I think they are very pro-counterrevolution. The idealistic young people who actually fought against the Sandinista army have real grievances. Their land has been confiscated or they have been persecuted for their religious views or they have resisted the Sandinista draft. But they are being used as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy by the CIA and the Reagan administration. And they are being used by the National Guardsmen and Somocista politicians who simply want to go back to Nicaragua to get back the money and the power they lost in 1979. If the *contras* ever took power, they would simply replace the communists with a law-and-order regime and no one would be any better off. What's more, many of the civilian *contra* leaders have children in their teens or 20s, and yet they do not send them to fight the war they favor so much. They expect the *campesinos* to continue to die while they live in Miami and wait for their dream to come true. I am now convinced that the *contra* cause for which I gave up two years of my life offers Nicaragua nothing but a return to the past. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Traveling to the Past

Steven Spielberg calls himself a Peter Pan, but he's one that J. M. Barrie wouldn't have dared to dream of. Spielberg is not only par excellence the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up: the world is paying him fabulously for his refusal. And do you remember the address that Peter gives when Wendy asks him where he lives? "Second to the right and straight on till morning." Talk about outer space! Barrie, be glad thou art not living at this hour. Fantasy has become gospel.

Back to the Future
(Universal)

Silverado
(Columbia)

Spielberg didn't write or direct *Back to the Future*—at least he gets no such credit. I mean no slur on the director, Robert Zemeckis, who wrote the script with Bob Gale, when I say that this entertaining film is a true Spielberg product. He presents the film and was executive coproducer; he also performed similar functions for *Poltergeist* and *The Goonies*, and there are common denominators in them, which have a relation to Spielberg's own *E. T.* They all deal with juveniles, ranging from very small to late adolescent. All come from middle-class white families. All the boys are right out of the heart of pop culture. This not only means pop music of the day, electric guitars, and skateboards, it means obsession with space and electronics. *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle* is now *Tom Swift and His Electronic Time-Propellant*. As for the girls, they neck in parked cars and, presumably, neck in bedrooms after marriage. What they want is for males to be brave and protective and to keep them safe in chintz-curtained California homes while the stork brings them babies.

Because of all this, not in spite of it, *Back to the Future* is considerable fun. However much Spielberg did or didn't have to do with the actual making of the film, Zemeckis and Gale understood the Spielberg turf and how to gambol on it, which they do very pleasantly. Zemeckis previously directed a different kind of realist/anti-realist romp, *Romancing the Stone*—also enjoyable. This time he and Gale deal with a high school boy, Marty, who has the right All-American equipment: a guitar, a skateboard, a steady girl, and a mad-scientist friend, old Dr. Brown. Dr. Brown has fashioned a time machine out of a De Lorean. Marty of course understands the scientific jargon that Dr. Brown spouts—what All-American boy wouldn't?—and the plot, as well as the car, propels Marty back 30 years: into the same town in 1955.

Trapped there, he searches out the younger Dr. Brown and convinces the scientist that his 30-years-hence self has sent him here without a means of return. The younger Brown then makes it his mission to get Marty and the De Lorean back to 1985. Meanwhile, however, Marty meets his mother—before her marriage, when she is still a high school girl—and she gets a crush on him. She much prefers him to the youth who, Marty knows, will become his own father. Before you can say "Oedipus complex," Marty contrives to get his future mother and father together so that he and his siblings can eventually get born.

Matters get tangled and untangled about the time return-trip, with film cutting and intercutting that D. W. Griffith would have recognized and approved. Of course logic is never the ace card in plots of this kind. Still, even though time-travel backward is not a new idea—it wasn't new when the Connecticut Yankee visited King Arthur's court—it's always a good springboard for thrills and for laughs, and it's well used here. For instance, in 1985 the town movie house is showing porno; in 1955 it's showing *Cattle Queen of Montana* with B. Stanwyck and R. Reagan.

Michael J. Fox, a likable and energetic fellow, plays Marty, with much falling down—slipping in the street, stumbling on stairs, bumbling into cars. Christopher Lloyd, a seriously good actor, has a high-camp, effective time as the old and young loony scientist. And back of it all, back of the gifts of Zemeckis and Gale, the presence of Spielberg keeps the film on Spielberg course. I read that he and Amy Irving have just had a son, so he'll never get out of touch with the young.

And the U.S. Mint had better schedule an increase in production. It's going to be needed by Spielberg fans.

Silverado is like an overstuffed deli sandwich—discouraging rather than prodigal. Not a sandwich at all, really: a big pile of meat with token and irrelevant pieces of bread at either end. My procedure—many do it, the counterman tells me—is to buy two extra slices of bread, take all the stuff home, and make two sandwiches, bite-size, manageable, not a jaw chore.

If only you could do something like that with *Silverado*, you might come up with two tolerable 70-minute films. As is, it's grossly overstuffed—with lots of plots (not really interwoven plot strands), lots of stock characters and stock scenes, and lots—I mean *lots*—of symphony-size music by Bruce

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Home and the World. Satyajit Ray's film of Tagore's novel gently yet firmly delineates change in the home and in the nation—East Bengal, 1907. (Reviewed 7/8/85)

The Shooting Party. Forgive the explicit symbolism about the coming catastrophe, and enjoy the dialogue, acting, and look of this English film, set in 1913. (6/17/85)

Streetwise. Excellently made documentary, full of unsentimental compassion, about young street people of Seattle. (5/13/85)

What Have I Done to Deserve This? Black comedy about Madrid today, full of grim fun though not finally quite black enough. (5/20/85)

SK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Broughton. All through the film, while it's dealing with any one sequence, you keep remembering that it has to return to the other plots in turn and carry them further. Therefore the picture ends about four times.

Lawrence Kasdan who lately dallied with contemporary *Angst* in *The Big Chill*, wrote the script with his brother Mark Kasdan. Lawrence directed. His motives for choosing to make a Western are not clear. All the plots are trite. All of them have, in the post-*Stagecoach* style, slightly stained heroes. The plot about the black family is not new. (Ask Sidney Poitier.) I expected, when I saw that it was a Kasdan job, that he would be scurrying after social or historical novelty in the genre, but the only heterodoxies are in some of the casting, all of them disastrous. A sheriff in a Western town is played by John Cleese of Monty Python, to nobody's advantage. A gambler in another town is played by Jeff Goldblum—who is not, shall we say, convincing in context. The woman who runs a huge saloon is played by diminutive Linda Hunt, and her genteel accent renders her even less credible than does her size. A young woman who has gone west to start a farm and make things grow is played by, so help me, Rosanna Arquette. Yes, that same Arquette, whose performance as a venturesome suburbanite in *Desperately Seeking Susan* is now bringing consolation to every faltering high school girl in a senior play, is here supposedly a sturdy pioneer. (In her favor, if possible, I note that her role is so patchy that much of it must have been left in the cutting room.)

Kasdan has seen plenty of Westerns and knows the rituals. If a young man, played by a minor actor, accompanies Arquette at the start, we know he's going to be killed so that one of the major actors can move next to her. (I've never seen anyone drier-eyed after the death of her companion than Arquette.) If a black man walks into a saloon and orders a drink, you know that it's being done to sort out the bigots in the crowd from those who are free of race prejudice. (And what a host of liberals must have been out there in those days.) If a Good Guy has been so trampled by a horse that he can hardly walk, you know he's going to straighten up and ride to the rescue when he hears that his little nephew has been kidnapped. If two former outlaw friends meet at the start and one of them has gone straight, you know which two men are going to face each other in the last shoot-out. It's all as ritualized as Kabuki but, unlike Kabuki, it pretends that it's fresh.

As the strong silent type, Scott Glenn is attractively wiry. Danny Glover, the persecuted vagrant in *Places in the Heart*, does as well as possible with a noble wanderer. Kevin Costner is breezy as a sexy two-gun type. Brian Dennehy, who would be lost without his barrel chest, smiles his way through another smooth scoundrel. Kevin Kline, bearded like the pard (Dennehy's old pard), lacks the quiet power he's meant to have. Kline needs to be in motion. No Spencer Tracy, he.

Kasdan supplies the standard anthology of Western shots: crane shots coming down to meet approaching riders or rising over the heads of departing riders; traveling shots alongside rushing horses; ridge shots of a file of riders; even the John Ford fording shot from the driver's seat of a wagon being hauled across a stream. This familiar repertoire is greatly helped, however, by John Bailey's cinematography, which strikes a subtle balance between the realistic and the suggestive. As in many Westerns, very little happens at midday; but Bailey uses the slanting light of morning or afternoon in nicely nostalgic ways.

TELEVISION

The Problem with Post-Racism

Many years ago, before Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, or even Bill Cosby were born, there were black comedians who made a splash with the white folks. One of these, Bert Williams, got top billing in the Ziegfeld Follies, made movies and records, and appeared before the king of England. Williams died in 1922, but if TV had been invented in his lifetime, who knows? He and his partner, George Walker, might have shuffled their way into America's living rooms, wearing blackface and calling themselves "Two Real Coons."

Williams and Walker added the word "real" to emphasize that their "coon show" was being performed by black men, not white. Without it, the audience might not have been able to tell, because both black and white minstrel performers were expected to apply the same burnt cork and engage in the same outlandish burlesque of black life. Needless to say, in such a context the word "real" takes on ironic reverberations—which only increase when we recall that it was Bert Williams's stated desire "to stop doing piffle and interpret the *real* Negro on stage." Of course, in those days it was fairly simple to distinguish between the piffle and the real. Or so it must have seemed to Williams when his only appearance without burnt cork—as a song-and-dance man in the 1914 movie *Darktown Jubilee*—provoked whites into starting a race riot.

Nowadays the distinction is a lot muddier, because wave after wave of black performers has broken through the barriers that once separated black taste from white. Not only that, but since the 1920s there have been countless "crossover" black musicians and comedians whose popularity among whites has been facilitated by the technology of private consumption. (It's one thing for whites to absorb the forms of black culture through records and TV, quite another for them to go out and rub elbows with real blacks.) Cinema occupies an interesting middle ground; most objections to blacks in film have been raised by distributors and theater owners concerned about attracting the wrong racial mix to their theaters.

It's hardly surprising, given this divergence between the private-cultural and the public-social experiences of white Americans, that their racial attitudes would diverge as well. I first noticed this back in the 1960s, when an acquaintance insisted that the Temptations were the best musical group of all time. When asked if she'd ever seen them live, she replied that I must be kidding. She went to one concert, she said, but left right away, because she felt uncomfortable in a crowd that was predominantly black.

Such paradoxical reactions are quite common, but it is rare to see critics acknowledge them. Perhaps to make

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

themselves feel important, pop-cultural pundits of all stripes claim a direct causal relation between the screen and the street. They forget that white America has been grooving on its black entertainers since Day One; and that since Day Two, some critics have declared this to be proof that white racism has gone the way of the dodo bird, while others (including most blacks) have looked, in ever more sophisticated ways, for those telltale signs of burnt cork. Neither side wants to give up the high ground of social-cultural analysis and admit the simple fact that whites can genuinely appreciate black cultural styles *without necessarily acquiring* new sympathy or liking for their black fellow citizens.

NOW A NEW wave of black superstars is enthralling white America through its VCRs and laser disk players, and the pundits are carrying on the same old debate about what it all means. From the optimistic right, Richard Grenier proclaims (in *Commentary* and *The New York Times*) that "God created Eddie Murphy" to tickle the funny bone of mass white audiences who are tired of being made to feel guilty about a "racist America," which "has not existed for many years now, and is, indeed, a piece of liberal mythology." A similar optimism radiates from *The Washington Post* film critic Paul Attanasio, who watches a slew of black-oriented movies (*Purple Rain*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, *A Soldier's Story*, and *The Last Dragon*) and deduces that race is no longer fate, but fashion. "Racial flair," he rhapsodizes, is now "a species of attire attractively displayed in the great Bloomingdale's of the soul . . . you can, on any given day, be black or Chinese or Italian, regardless of birthright. Race isn't indelible, but it isn't flattened, either; it's freed from genes and made available to the will, as the rootedness of racial style evanesces in absurdity."

I can just picture young Mr. Attanasio evanescing his way into Washington's countercultural Adams-Morgan neighborhood, where his racial flair can blend with that of his exotic black brethren. Too bad he doesn't admit the continuing hothouse nature of the experiment—the fact that evanescing is a whole lot easier in a trendy Ethiopian restaurant than among the unemployed men drinking paper-sack cocktails three blocks east of the *Post*. By these lights, the Motion Picture Academy needs a new rating; not PG or R but PR, for "post-racist."

Meanwhile, back on the left, the phenomenon of black "crossover" appeal is interpreted more gloomily. A recent *Village Voice* article lambastes Eddie Murphy for being a "Reagan Court Jester" who "drifts right into homophobia and racism." Unlike Richard Pryor, whose authentically black humor is described as coming out of "memories of a wretched childhood" that put him "nose-to-nose with the system," Murphy is a "defiantly shallow . . . suburban kid" whose chief motivation is to be loved and accepted by whites. What Grenier admires—Murphy's ability to distance himself from the clichés of black protest humor—the *Voice* abhors as craven cultural oreoism.

None of this would matter if the public could just go on enjoying the superstars' latest super-games: Murphy as Jesse Jackson crooning a de-wop version of "Good Old Hymietown"; Bill Cosby making gentle fun of the only white tot at a slumber party; Prince and Michael Jackson pumping out their music while dressing like extras from *Amadeus*. But the critics' worldview is not just the critics'. It is a powerful myth, shared by many performers, which decrees that widespread white acceptance of a black act can mean only one of two things: either the act is a coon show, or another breakthrough has occurred in American race relations.

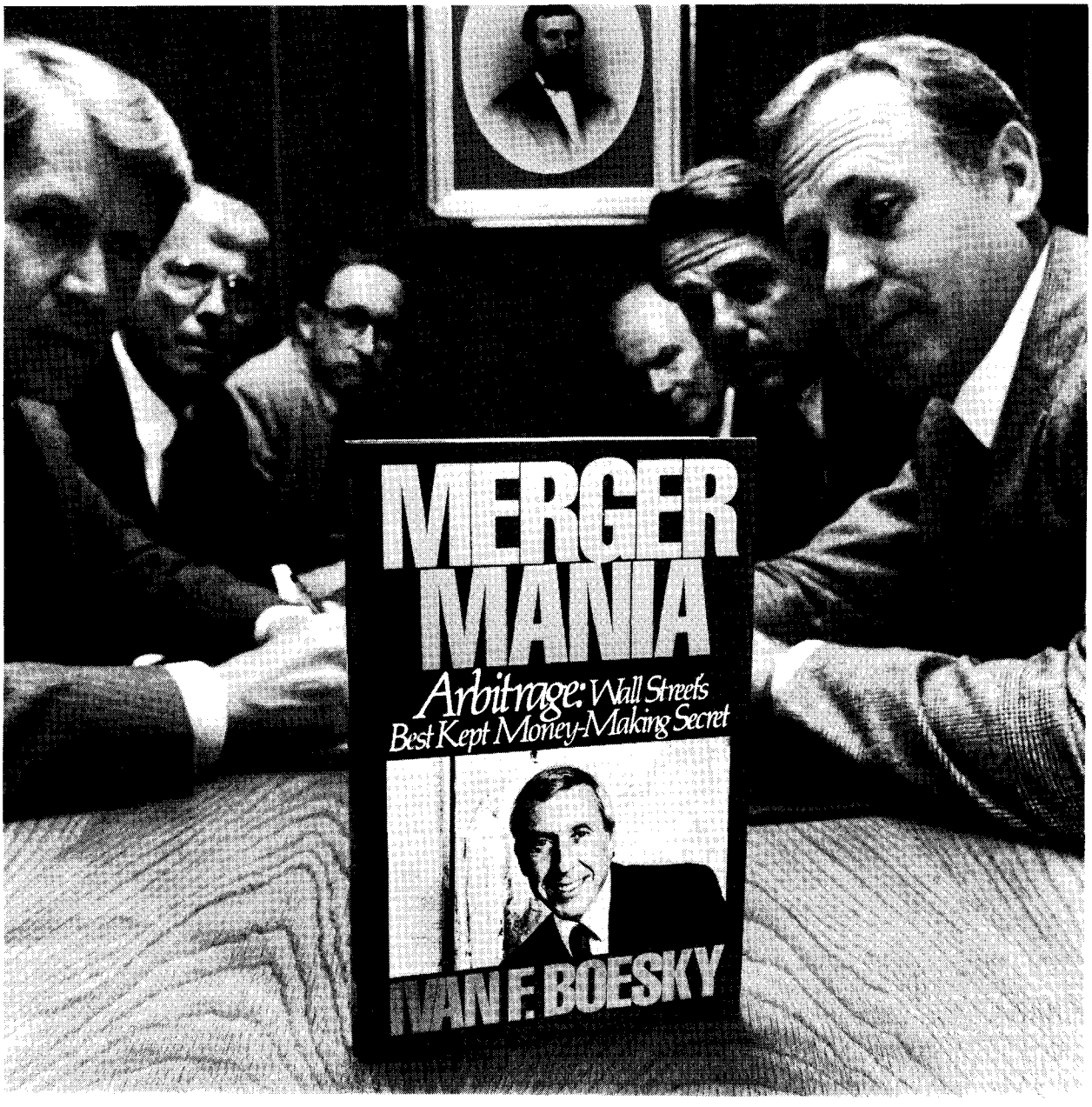
STUCK WITH this dilemma, black performers can react in just a few ways. Those who live a sheltered life, like Jackson and his sweetness-and-light predecessor, Stevie Wonder, talk a lot about "love." Obviously they don't see themselves as cultural oreos (nor should they), so they harp on the post-racist theme. As Jackson gushed recently to *Ebony*: "an artist can be built up so big in his career that this could change the whole world. . . . That's why it's so important to give off love vibes."

Stars more in touch with reality, like Richard Pryor, go for the other horn of the dilemma and torment themselves about losing their blackness and becoming old-fashioned clowns for the white folks. Before his recent burning accident, Pryor had a tendency (no doubt exacerbated by drugs and alcohol) toward bursts of violent temper over real or imagined racial slurs. And unlike Murphy, he rarely made allowances in his comedy routines for the presence of hip white fans who appreciate even his saltiest life-in-the-ghetto vignettes. Instead he won the hearts of *The Village Voice* crowd by hammering away at the twin stereotypes of the brutish redneck and the prissy white liberal. Since his injury, he has been producing a Saturday morning children's TV program, which suggests that he may be switching over to the "love" mode. Still, I wonder if he will ever get rid of that deep-seated black performer's instinct to prove he's not wearing blackface by expressing hostility toward whites.

THE OTHER way of proving authentic blackness is obscenity. If the quip is true about the British army, that within its ranks the word "fucking" signifies nothing more than the approach of a noun, then Pryor could teach the soldiers a few things about verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. And it's not just parts of speech; he makes long, graphic speeches about parts. Eddie Murphy does the same thing, although Grenier tries to minimize this aspect of his humor when claiming him for "post-racist America." Grenier misquotes Murphy's parting shot at last year's concert at Washington's Constitution Hall, which he delivered after reminding the audience that Marian Anderson had not been allowed to perform there 30 years before: "Here we are, not even 50 years later, a 22-year-old black man on stage. . . . God bless America!" Fill in Grenier's decorous ellipsis, and you have Murphy's actual comment: "Here we are, not even 50 years later, a black man on stage holding his dick. God bless America!"

They may not affect the patriotism, but those three words, "holding his dick," turn Murphy from an Eagle Scout back into a raunchy comedian. They also restore a certain edge to his blackness, placing him in a tradition dating back through Redd Foxx to the Apollo Theater's legendary "Pigmeat" Markham. Whites have their own bawdy traditions, but there was a time when blacks and whites did not enjoy sexual humor in each other's company. This is still true to the extent that whites feel uncomfortable with immoderate blue humor delivered by blacks, especially when it is tinged with braggadocio. Black performers know this perfectly well, and increase the dose of obscenity—along with hostility—whenever they wish to appear more "black."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



IT TELLS YOU EVERYTHING EXCEPT WHAT IVAN'S BUYING.

Every day on Wall Street, you hear it whispered. "Ivan's buying. Ivan's buying." People will do anything to find out what Ivan's buying.

Ivan F. Boesky isn't telling. But in his new book, *Merger Mania*, he tells you just about everything else.

He explains risk arbitrage is as much art as science and has absolutely nothing to do with gambling.

According to the man estimated by *Forbes* to be worth over $150 million, and whom *Fortune* called a "money machine," there is no mystery to arbitrage.

All that's required is steady nerves, quick responses, a penchant for research, attention to detail, a passion for winning, and everything Ivan F. Boesky knows.

Read *Merger Mania*. And, soon, the whispering may be about you.

$18.95/Available at your bookstore

Holt, Rinehart & Winston

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unfortunately, self-definition in these terms has the potential of leaving black performers with little to call their own except sex and anger. I don't care how expertly these topics are handled; it's pathetic to see the culture of black Americans reduced to obscenity and hostility, as if these constituted its pure essence or core. Yet there are a great many pundits and performers who take precisely this view, for the simple reason that obscenity and hostility have become isolated, over the years, as those ingredients of black expression most likely to offend whites.

OF COURSE, thanks to increasing levels of private consumption, this offense has been rapidly lessening. Today's MTV-addicted young whites feel perfectly comfortable when Prince licks the microphone, or Murphy boasts about his "dick." As for the hostility, I will grant that the angle of attack has narrowed. These young black performers make a generous allowance for sophisticated whites who know how to dig this riff or that routine. But they are just as merciless as ever toward the unhip, the uptight—the *honky*. Just look at the incredible arrogance Murphy displays in his movies.

Which brings us to Bill Cosby, who reigns over the largest white audience of all—watchers of prime-time network television. Perhaps because Cosby has never gotten stuck on a dilemma about the social or artistic implications of his enormous popularity, he has been able to lift an entire network (NBC) into second place over ABC, which is still (along with CBS) gnashing its teeth over having rejected the pitch that became "The Cosby Show." Last fall, when the series premiered, the critics came out with the usual suspicions. "Cosby," *The Village Voice* hissed, "no longer qualifies as black enough to be an Uncle Tom." *Newsweek* quoted other critics who called the show, about an upper-middle-class black family, "a racial neuter" and " 'Father Knows Best' in blackface." Some of these objections are still floated, although they are mere sticks on the flood of adulation that has followed the show's amazing success in the ratings. TV columnists nationwide proclaim that America has had (guess what?) another racial breakthrough.

When Cosby pooh-poohs both interpretations, he gets called "defensive." He isn't defensive, he just doesn't buy the myth that nothing authentically black can be accepted by whites as long as prejudice prowls the land. Unlike the all-black sitcoms of the 1970s ("Sanford and Son," "The Jeffersons," "Good Times"), "The Cosby Show" does not rely upon the Norman Lear formula of jive-talking, poor-mouthing, and liberal speech-making to convey a sense of blackness. Lear and his followers knew they couldn't put obscenity and hostility on the national airwaves, so they substituted their Hollywood-derived notion of black people as happy-go-lucky good guys with a self-righteous gripe. The talents of cast members like Redd Foxx kept this genre alive for a while, but the combination of tasteless jokes and solemn preaching eventually turned viewers off. It became an industry axiom that the audience was sick of blacks, except one at a time in bizarre aberrations like "Diff'rent Strokes," "Webster," "Gimme a Break," and "Benson"—four shows on the air now that feature one black face in an affluent all-white setting.

But the audience isn't sick of blacks. It's sick of Hollywood blacks. Those who say that Cosby's sitcom family isn't "black" betray their own disturbingly narrow assumption that blacks are what Norman Lear says they are: a collection of poverties, problems, and pathologies about which we can only laugh or lecture. Why else would anyone deny this one ethnic group a privilege accorded all others—namely the chance to combine mobility with identity? Cosby's sitcom family is equally as black as any well-to-do Jewish, Italian, or Greek family is Jewish, Italian, or Greek—provided they have not lost their taste for their grandparents' values, art, music, food, and banter.

The most salient thing about "The Cosby Show," however, is not its blackness but its portrayal of a human type rarely seen on TV: parents who are wiser than their kids. Like every other aspect of popular culture, TV has succumbed to the cult of youth, as children are invariably smarter, hipper, and more enlightened than well-meaning but backward Mom and Dad. Not so Cosby's Huxtables. Never mind his genius for entertaining children, as the father in this family he does something far more significant and attractive to contemporary viewers: he wields authority. On this program the kids do not have all the lines, and their rebellious, self-centered excuses don't stand a chance against Cosby's old-fashioned zingers: "Because I told you so," and "Because I'm your father, I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

More than anything, this affirmation of adult authority eliminates that hard core of hostility that has come to dominate the youth culture, sex and anger being the adolescent's favorite weapons against the adult world. The secret of Cosby's success is deceptively simple: he has suggested, in this seemingly innocuous television show, that there is more to black life in America than those habits of the underclass that appeal most to screaming white teenagers.

MARTHA BAYLES

Martha Bayles is TV critic for *The Wall Street Journal*, and has recently completed a novel, *Boston Common*.

GENE GENIE

In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity by Daniel J. Kevles

(Knopf, 426 pp., $22.95)

We commonly suppose that the science of heredity began with the rediscovery of Mendel's laws in 1900; yet even during the 35 years when Mendel's paper lay dormant, all sorts of people were systematically investigating the physiological basis and the statistical principles of the passing down of traits of body and behavior by organisms to their offspring. While the results of some of these investigations were grossly oversimple or downright wrong, others remain essential to our present understanding of genetics. (This understanding is itself incomplete and in flux.) Those were decades of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

richly productive scientific uncertainty; and from them emerged, along with the science, several powerful notions that have almost ineradicably prejudiced public discussion of human heredity—and public policy on issues thought to relate to human heredity—to this day. The most fundamental of these persistent Victorian notions, though, is extra- or infra-scientific: that by application of the science of heredity we ought to be able to defend and improve the quality of the human stock—and that if we can, we must. This doctrine was first advanced by Charles Darwin's cousin Francis Galton, who in 1883 christened it "eugenics," which he defined as the study of "the conditions under which men of a high type are produced."

The rise of eugenics was inextricably bound up with the developments that prepared the rediscovery of Mendel's laws. Physiologists were scrutinizing the way cells divide. This work, prominently that of August Weismann, in Germany, began to provide a material, plausible basis for heredity. The dance of the chromosomes in cell division and fertilization could be visualized; once known, it was waiting to be matched to the abstract Mendelian algebra. Weismann's research led him to a simple yet deep theoretical conclusion. He argued convincingly that, as we now say, heredity is hard—that is, that what he called the germ plasm is not subject to directed modification during a creature's life. Weismann was one of the first to state categorically that an organism cannot transmit to its descendants characteristics it has acquired through use, disuse, or accident. (Darwin was soft on this point.) Book after book, Weismann was promptly translated and widely read.

AS IMPORTANT, in those decades the new science of statistics arose and thrived. The use of statistics is today so much a part of the context of our lives that we are hardly conscious of the transformation this mode of reasoning has forced upon the way we apprehend the world. The depth of that transformation cannot be exaggerated. Statistics began as the tool of the state—whence its name; it was about populations and their measurable characteristics, about variation, about underlying patterns in fluctuating data. From the beginning of an effective science of heredity, statistical methods were crucial. Mendel's work was conceptually radical not least because he treated his data statistically. Several of the most basic modern statistical methods were invented by the Victorian investigators of human heredity. Galton introduced the coefficient of correlation. His fellow eugenicist Karl Pearson developed, among much else, the chi squared test, which remains the standard formula for assessing how well a statistical explanation accords with the data available.

GALTON and Darwin argued the issues of heredity. For Darwin, heredity was a central, lifelong, heartbreaking conundrum, and the subject of the largest work he published. *Variation in Animals and Plants Under Domestication* appeared in 1868—nine years after the *Origin of Species* sold out its first edition on the day of its issue, two years after Mendel's report on hybrid peas appeared and vanished. The treatise amounts to a disastrous misapplication of Darwin's scholarly, all-embracing, syncretic method, which had been triumphant in development of the theory of evolution by natural selection. A copy of Mendel's paper may even have passed through Darwin's hands, but no evidence hints that he read it.

In December of 1875 Galton dropped Darwin a note to pursue an idea for a mechanism in which, when individuals are crossed that have alternate versions of some trait, material hereditary particles are brought together without actually blending, or fusing, to produce offspring that display the trait in question in well-defined ratios. (Galton was thinking of white or black skin color—and had previously written about the various shades of mulatto.) We now know these as the Mendelian ratios. Galton did not offer two other crucial insights Mendel had reached, namely, that in expression one elementary hereditary unit affecting a trait may be dominant over its alternate, and that the analysis can be extended to a number of pairs of different traits inherited independently. He got the Mendelian ratios not from experiment but rather from statistical principles; he did not pursue them far and did not publish them. In his letter he was after something else. Most naturalists took it for granted that heredity involved blending the hereditary contributions of the parents. Darwin was convinced of this, and found it a grave problem, because any new variation that might be favorable to an organism would be swamped

THE BEST FILMS YOU NEVER SAW.

Now you can rent videocassettes by mail of over 300 hard-to-find quality films, including *El Norte, Berlin Alexanderplatz, Choose Me, The Brother from Another Planet, Pixote, 8½, The 4th Man,* and *Entre Nous.*

Our ever-expanding library includes foreign and independent films, limited release features, Hollywood classics, cult favorites and documentaries.

Members simply order toll-free, and receive cassettes promptly by mail or UPS. It's simple and inexpensive. Phone or write for free information.

1-800-258-FILM
(in PA, 1-800-633-FILM)

Home Film Festival
Videocassette rentals by mail
305 Linden Street, Scranton, PA 18503

AUDIO-FORUM® offers the best in self-instructional foreign language courses using audio cassettes — featuring those used to train U.S. State Dept. personnel in Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, Japanese, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, Italian, and more. **Learn a foreign language on your own!** Free Catalog

Call **(203) 453-9794**, or fill out and send this ad to —

Audio-Forum
Room K35, On-the-Green
Guilford, CT 06437

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

I am particularly interested in (check choice): ☐ Spanish ☐ French ☐ Polish ☐ Greek ☐ Russian ☐ Vietnamese ☐ Bulgarian ☐ Turkish ☐ German ☐ Other _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out before natural selection could save it. Galton wished to show that heredity even of traits that appear to vary continuously over a range, like skin color or height, could perfectly well be the outcome of multiple determining factors that do not individually blend. (Mendelian geneticists did not catch up to this point until 1910.)

DANIEL KEVLES, who is a historian at the California Institute of Technology, has now written the history of eugenics from Galton to gene therapy. The strands of this history are tangled, its characters often eccentric, their backgrounds, politics, and motives extraordinarily diverse. Nonetheless, eugenics as such has been a movement in large part peculiar to England and the United States, with vigorous transatlantic interaction. At its height, it appeared to be exporting ideas worldwide—yet imported surprisingly little. Kevles has made the strategic choice to stay out of Continental Europe—a choice necessary for logistical reasons, to be sure, since the research and the book itself would have doubled, but justifiable, too, on straight historical grounds. Racism was strong in the thinking of many eugenicists; yet they responded only fitfully to the perfervid Continental tradition of mystical racism that ran from Gobineau to such as Wagner, Maurras, Jung, and the Nazi ideologue Rosenberg. Similarly, elitism was of course one strand of eugenics, yet the movement had a lot more to it than an Anglo-Saxon protofascism. For Kevles's enterprise, totalitarian elitism and racism are something of an intellectual black hole: he cannot ignore its pull yet must keep the distance that prevents its swallowing all illumination of other matters.

Three particular notions about the consequences of heredity for man have persisted since Galton first advanced them. The first of these is that as the breeder or the seedsman can cross and select to improve domestic stocks, so it ought to be possible to breed people, or at least encourage them to breed, to improve succeeding generations. The second is that human intelligence—the quality that most obviously one would want to improve—has a large hereditary component. This second notion has often carried with it a couple of lemmas: that the hereditary component is the strongest determinant of an individual's intelligence, outweighing any influence of environment generally and education in particular; and that the hereditary component is some unitary and measurable factor. The third notion is that certain less favored groups in the population are having children at a greater rate than other, superior groups, a differential process that cannot fail steadily to reduce the quality of the human stock.

To many, these ideas have seemed—still seem—so obvious as hardly to require proof. The arguments against them developed slowly and are comparatively sophisticated; they grow steadily more powerful as we deepen our understanding of how genes actually control growth of the organism in interaction with each other and the environment. The eugenic impulse has crested twice. Details of the justifications—and the nature of the opposition, too—have altered as the purported scientific rationalizations have changed. We now appear to be on the rise of a third wave whose justifications will be different still.

GALTON WAS the original eugenic eccentric. Independently rich, a brilliant semi-amateur whose marriage was barren, he was obsessed with counting and numbering things. In a celebrated and typical incident, he looked into the power of prayer by determining whether members of the royal family, for whom people prayed a lot, outlived others, and published the fact that they did not as a demonstration that prayer doesn't work. He grew into manhood, Kevles suspects, with a vivid sense of sin. When he first read the *Origin*, Galton wrote to Darwin, "Your book drove away the constraint of my old superstition, as if it was a nightmare." Galton conceived of eugenics as a secular religion—and this quality, too, swept in followers. Yet he recognized that an effective eugenic program was not possible so long as heredity was not understood. His secular faith impelled him to investigate heredity and to make his discoveries in statistics. He wrote many books. *Heredity Genius* and *Natural Inheritance* had lasting influence—even though they lacked rigor and were the sort of work, Kevles observes, to be expected of a man "who was neither a formal mathematician nor an intellectually disciplined scientist." Kevles's characterization of Galton is amusing and acid, his summation just:

> He was in fact unable to shed any real light on the heritability of talent or intelligence . . . but he did contribute crucially to the study of heredity. . . . Galton gave heredity a sharp—albeit, of course, a non-Mendelian—definition: the quantitative, hence measurable, relationship between generations for given characters.

Karl Pearson, Galton's chief follower and eventual biographer, began as a freethinker and a socialist, if not an enthusiastic democrat. He was a sexual radical, if not exactly experienced, and came to believe that women's rights were, after socialism, the issue of the day. Intended by his father for a career at the bar, Pearson escaped into mathematics and a post at University College, London, where he began to develop new statistical tools, started a biometric laboratory, and launched a journal he titled *Biometrika*. He labored to make Galton's work more rigorous, notably the idea that heredity determines mental ability. Obtaining estimates of children's abilities from their teachers, he compared correlations between siblings with those between children who were not related—a procedure of problematic crudity that, nonetheless, was the start of an unending line of heritability studies. He continually urged what he once called a matter of "the greatest national importance—the breeding from the fitter stocks."

EUGENICS grew acceptable. Darwin was persuaded by Galton that genius tends to be inherited. H. G. Wells, in 1895, in one of the episodes in *The Time Machine*, imagined a future in which uncontrolled breeding has evolved an English upper class that is artistic, effete, helpless—kept by a satanic working class as pets and for food. Kevles omits the example but places Wells perennially on the outskirts of the movement. Havelock Ellis, Ottoline Morrell, Beatrice and Sidney Webb became proponents. George Bernard Shaw plunged in. He was a friend of Pearson; he pumped up *Man and Superman*, and especially its preface, with eugenic slogans. The young Harold Laski, already a socialist, worked six months in Pearson's laboratory before going up to Oxford. He had tea with the aging Galton, who described him to Pearson as "simply a *beautiful* youth of the Jewish type." Laski published in *Biometrika* an able demolition of the idea that an identifiable Jewish physical type exists and is inherited in a Mendelian pattern. In 1910, in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—called the scholars'

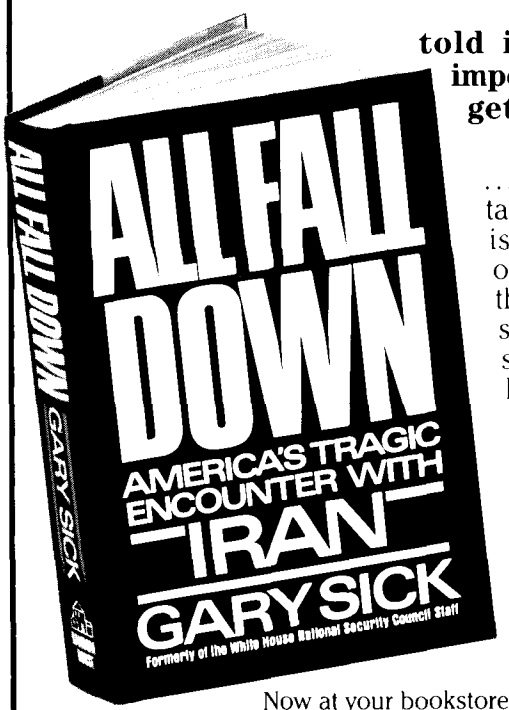
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edition for the great distinction of many of its contributors—the author of the article "Civilization" concluded by predicting "the organic betterment of the race through the wise application of the laws of heredity."

AFTER the rediscovery of Mendel, Pearson and other biometricians fought venomously for years against the central Mendelian tenet that heredity is determined by the shuffle and redealing of alternative, non-blending units. In the United States, without such opposition, Mendelian genetics took hold as a strong research program. One of the more able American Mendelians, Charles Davenport—he demonstrated the Mendelian inheritance of human eye color—became the country's leading eugenicist. Davenport had "a Babbitt-like religiosity, a worship of great concepts," Kevles says. Margaret Sanger, the crusader for birth control, remembered that Davenport, worried about the harm contraception would do to the better stocks, "used to lift his eyes reverently and, with his hands upraised as though in supplication, quiver emotionally as he breathed, 'Protoplasm. We want more protoplasm.' " Davenport was an entrepreneur. He got the Carnegie Institution of Washington, just established for the promotion of research, to finance a station for the experimental study of evolution. This he set up in 1904 at Cold Spring Harbor, hard by Oyster Bay on the north shore of Long Island. He began collecting family pedigrees, extensive ones, with questionnaires by the thousands.

From the start, American eugenics displayed systematic differences from the British. Ethnically, England's population was effectively homogeneous, blacks were as yet rare, Jews were concentrated in the East End of London and Irish Catholics in Liverpool and a few other cities. Wells's bitter fantasy in *The Time Machine* suggests rightly that the deepest hostility tapped by British eugenics was that of class. The United States, then at least, was socially more fluid, but the widespread antagonism of Anglo-Saxon Protestants to blacks and to the new immigrants from central and southern Europe was a powerful recruiting force for American eugenics and powerfully shaped its content. Promoting the procreation of good stock, meaning the professional middle classes, in the manner of British eugenicists was fine but not nearly enough. Ameri-

What the first hostage crisis taught us...


ALL FALL DOWN
AMERICA'S TRAGIC ENCOUNTER WITH IRAN
GARY SICK
Formerly of the White House National Security Council Staff
ALL FALL DOWN GARY SICK

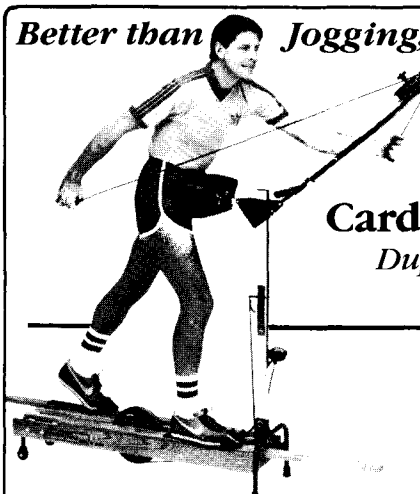
told in "the single most important account we will get on American policy failures in Iran

...Sick was often the note-taker at [the Carter administration's] crisis meetings on Iran and he developed the deepest, most sustained sense of the American response to the Iranian challenge to Carter's presidency."
—JIM HOAGLAND, *Washington Post Book World*

"Convincing, fair and balanced...cool, sharp and restrained." —STANLEY HOFFMAN, front page, *N.Y. Times Book Review*

Now at your bookstore **RANDOM HOUSE**

Better than Jogging, Swimming, or Cycling...



NordicTrack

Jarless Total Body
Cardiovascular Exerciser
Duplicates X-C Skiing for the Best Motion in Fitness

Cross-country skiing is often cited by physiologists as the most perfect form of cardiovascular exercise for both men and women. Its smooth, fluid, total body motion uniformly exercises more muscles so higher heart rates seem easier to attain than when jogging or cycling. NordicTrack closely simulates the pleasant X-C skiing motion and provides the same cardiovascular endurance-building benefits–right in the convenience of your home, year 'round. Eliminates the usual barriers of time, weather, chance of injury, etc. Also highly effective for weight control.

More Complete Than Running

NordicTrack gives you a more complete work out–conditions both upper body and lower body muscles at the same time. Fluid, jarless motion does not cause joint or back problems.

More Effective Than Exercise Bikes

NordicTrack's stand-up skiing motion more uniformly exercises the large leg muscles and also adds important upper body exercise. Higher pulse rates, necessary for building fitness, seem easier to attain because the work is shared by more muscle mass.

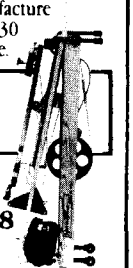
Even Better Than Swimming

NordicTrack more effectively exercises the largest muscles in the body, those located in the legs and buttocks. When swimming, the body is supported by the water, thus preventing these muscles from being effectively exercised. The stand up exercising position on the NordicTrack much more effectively exercises these muscles.

A Proven, High Quality Durable Product

NordicTrack is in its 7th year of production. NordicTrack is quiet, motorless and has separately adjustable arm and leg resistances. We manufacture and sell direct. Two year warrantee, 30 day trial period with return privilege.

Folds and stands on end to require only 15" x 17" storage space.



Call or write for...
FREE BROCHURE
Toll Free 1-800-328-5888
Minnesota 612-448-6987
PSI, 124NR Columbia Crt., Chaska, MN 55318

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can eugenicists laid their stress upon stopping the proliferation of the bad.

Mendelism in early triumph allied itself oddly with eugenics of this negative turn. Davenport, for example, though one part of him recognized that geneticists didn't know enough to advise on "falling in love intelligently," nonetheless concluded elsewhere that prostitution was caused by "innate eroticism"—which was determined by a dominant Mendelian gene. Eugenics was proselytized with increasing energy and success. Eugenics societies were founded in both Britain and the United States; the American one published *A Eugenics Catechism*, started a eugenics sermon contest, and launched at state fairs, beginning in Topeka, Kansas, in 1920, a hugely popular program of Fitter Families contests.

THE DIPPY enthusiasm is evident—and Kevles is a mine of these jewels. But fanaticism, of course, had an edge. Galton in his memoirs came to the conclusion that certain problems, and especially the proliferation of degenerates, were so urgent and evident that coercion by the state was perhaps justified. In the United States, immigration seemed a growing emergency. Davenport supported limiting immigration, at least selectively. "No race *per se*, whether Slovak, Ruthenian, Turk or Chinese, is dangerous and none undesirable," he wrote. Yet he took Mendel to prove that the melting pot could not melt, so the problem was to detect, by use of family histories, individuals with hereditary "imbecile, epileptic, insane, criminalistic, alcoholic, and sexually immoral tendencies." These ought to be prevented from immigrating. Perhaps those already here ought to be prevented from breeding. For American eugenicists, Kevles writes, "sterilization went hand in hand with immigration restriction and was just as justifiable."

Intelligence testing also appeared. Before the First World War, Alfred Binet's tests had been brought to the United States by Henry Goddard, a psychologist, who adapted them for use with mentally deficient inmates of an institution he ran in New Jersey. Robert Yerkes, another psychologist, who had been a student of Davenport, developed competing tests at Harvard. Then during the war a committee headed by Yerkes and including Goddard devised intelligence tests for mass administration, and the United States Army used them on some 1,700,000 recruits. The tests were derided as useless by many officers, while psychologists attacked them for blatant cultural bias. The momentum was irreversible. Those objections to intelligence tests still persist, of course. So does widespread reliance on the testing—another substantial cultural difference between Britain and the United States.

In 1911 six states had laws allowing compulsory sterilization for certain defects thought to be inherited. In 1924 in an eight-to-one vote, with the opinion written by Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Supreme Court upheld a Virginia sterilization law. By 1930, 24 states had such laws, though those where they were put to use were fewer. By the mid-1930s, more than 20,000 legal compulsory sterilizations had been carried out. The justification was usually "feeblemindedness." Yet a prime cause of concern about the feebleminded was their sexual behavior. The females, in particular, were agreed "to be sources of debauchery, licentiousness, and illegitimacy," Kevles writes, generous as always with the telling quotations; and he concludes:

> Why such distress at social deviance? An entire sociopolitical movement can hardly be put on the analyst's couch, but the attention given to eroticism, the denunciation of feminism, and the genital attack implicit in sterilization all suggest the possibility that mainline genetics was driven in part by the psychic energy of a repressed discomfort with sexuality.

BUT PAUSE. Kevles's narrative carries eugenics on from this first wave, past the Depression, past the Second World War, past the Nazi charnel house of racism and the response to it, past the I.Q. controversy and the sociobiology controversy to the present day. He is copious always, occasionally repetitious to the point of irritation, bemusing and horrifying by turns. He keeps many things in balance—biographical sketches, social history, the self-immolating quotations, and the science, which last is central. The book's import is not directly polemical—and is all the more powerful for confronting folly in such bulk with urbanity and a clear eye. Yet Kevles's analysis could be crisper. Three questions must be disentangled from the ropy mass.

Why did eugenics recede? Even by the time of the First World War, Kevles writes, the movement was provoking into being a coalition of opponents still more diverse than itself—with deeper moral rectitude and stronger scientific foundations. The Roman Catholic Church denounced eugenics early and late on the principle that those who may be called biologically unfit are indistinguishably children of God—a stand expressed in many ways and given political urgency by the fact that eugenics made its target the poor and the indigent, including the church's immigrant members in the slums of Liverpool and London, Boston, Chicago, and New York. Humane men of various persuasions detested the reduction of human quality to biology and the measurable. H. L. Mencken insisted that "the sharecropper, though he may appear to the scientist to be hardly human, is yet as much under the protection of the Bill of Rights as the president of Harvard, " and went on, "He may not be jailed, unless he has perpetrated some overt act forbidden by law, and he may not be gelded unless his continuance at stud is plainly and undoubtedly dangerous to society."

AT THE other extreme, a growing number of eminent geneticists began to attack the movement as false biology falsely applied. Thomas Hunt Morgan, the premier American Mendelian, dropped out of professional associations that had eugenic connections. Hermann Muller, perhaps the most brilliant as well as the furthest left of Morgan's early young colleagues, had at first sympathized with the hope that genetics could be used for human improvement; yet he turned against the creed, denouncing it at the Third International Eugenics Congress. But the most sustained and influential scientific attack came from three British scientists, all men of the left, all distinguished as geneticists and evolutionary theorists: J. B. S. Haldane, Julian Huxley, and Lancelot Hogben. Hogben had always opposed the central claims of the first wave of eugenics. The other two had the extra strength and persuasiveness of having at one time or another been on the fringes of the movement. From a different intellectual quarter, the biologists were joined by social scientists, prominently including the anthropologist Franz Boas and his student Margaret Mead. These took as their particular target (as, indeed, did Hogben) the absurdity of supposing that intelligence is unitary, that the degree to which it is he-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reditary can be isolated, that it can be reliably measured by intelligence tests, that such tests could be constructed free of cultural bias—and, worst, that comparison of the averaged scores for two given groups can have any meaning whatever when the difference between the averages is always small compared to the range within each group.

At this point the issues become technical to an extreme—and in two areas, statistics and molecular genetics, in which only a few specialists are simultaneously adept. Yet the technicalities cannot be shirked, for that leaves the consequences for public policy to the plausible simplifiers. The case is that, to this day, responsible geneticists find the nature of human intelligence so complex and elusive that they tell me we do not even know how to put the question. Here Kevles, by the very fullness of his historical account, sometimes splits up and blurs the clarity of the technical exposition.

NOR, I think, does he push far enough the reasons that the movement receded. To begin, we may wish to celebrate the resilience and sensible skepticism of everyday life in Britain and the United States. One supposes that winners of a Fitter Families contest must have taken a deal of solemn ribbing from their small-town neighbors. As an aspect of this, we ought to remind ourselves of the spread in this century, particularly in the United States, of what might be called the journeyman intellectual and scientific life. The breadth of Kevles's citations on a well-delineated subject like the determination of the heritability of intelligence from the study of identical twins reared apart—work that takes scarce materials and many years to carry out—testifies not only to his scholarship but to the responsibility for the state of our knowledge assumed by a variety of working scientists. An example is the group at the University of Chicago who in the 1930s concluded, from a methodologically rigorous study of 19 pairs of identical twins reared apart, that about all one can say is that what heredity could do, environment could also do. Still further, though, the vitality of Anglo-American eugenics surely sprang not only from dynamics of class and race and individual psychology but from the living roots of the movement in genetics, statistics, and evolutionary theory. Eugenics has never been so far removed from science and the active sympathy of good scientists as to be beyond control and correction. Thus, in perhaps the most interesting instance, in the mid-1930s a new group of geneticists and other biologists began to recapture the study of human genetics and cleanse it of its eugenic biases. They were encouraged by established scientists like Haldane, Ronald A. Fisher, and Hogben and financed by new sources like the Rockefeller Foundation and in Britain the Medical Research Council. Today human genetics is one of the most rigorous enterprises in science.

ARE WE now innoculated and immune? The inanities and excesses of the first half-century of eugenics make the more recent controversies over the heritability of intelligence and over sociobiology seem anemic and transitory. To be sure, scientists will always arise, just as administrators and politicians will arise, who treat people as things, as mere objects, as no more than statistics of an occasionally recalcitrant kind. Yet at the level of sturdy common sense we do learn from the past.

And the future? Terms change, new concepts succeed the old. We now talk of deleterious mutations, the gene pool—that is, the genetic makeup of an entire population—and the genetic load, meaning the pollution of the gene pool by those mutations. Kevles recognizes "a new eugenics" beginning to rise from the most recent 15 years or so of molecular genetics—the rise of genetic engineering, the power of human genetics to isolate an increasing number of single-gene defects that produce diseases, the imminence of gene therapy for some of those disorders. Here his narrative muddles the issues. To evaluate the dire political and social dangers that some profess to see, the present science must first be grasped with all clarity and the possible distinguished from the unlikely. Yet, for example, he does not note the gulf that divides the goal of replacing a single missing or defective gene to cure an illness from the idea of improving some general human attribute like longevity or intelligence that is determined by an exquisite balance of influence among many disparate genes—and then by the process of their multiple expression in a given microenvironment.

The consequences of recent discoveries can't be taken far without the full

Meeting the Expectations of the Land

ESSAYS IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND STEWARDSHIP

Edited by

Wes Jackson
Wendell Berry
Bruce Colman

The authors comprise a distinguished group of experts in many agricultural and ecological fields. They address a wide range of current issues and problems, arguing eloquently for agrarian reform. The vision that these authors provide of our current "progress" towards peril is indeed frightening, yet the book also offers hopeful possibilities in its unifying concept of sustainable agriculture.

Cloth, $22.50
Paper, $12.50

NORTH POINT PRESS
850 Talbot Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94706

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

detail of the science. Yet the eugenic impulse in its purest form—the determination to use all we can know about human heredity to make the lives of individual humans better—will not die. Why should it? But we can be sure that this impulse in its third wave, now rising, will be more closely tethered to the science it is based on than at any time since Galton wrote to his cousin Darwin about hereditary mechanisms.

HORACE FREELAND JUDSON

Horace Freeland Judson is Henry R. Luce Professor in the Writing Seminars at The Johns Hopkins University and author of *The Eighth Day of Creation* (Simon and Schuster).

FEARS AND FAREWELLS

Late Settings
by James Merrill

(Atheneum, 87 pp., $12.95, $6.95 paper)

At the heart of James Merrill's new collection of lyrics lies his farewell to Greece, where he used to spend part of each year. Merrill urges a grace in losing "Greece itself," a Greece no longer what it was:

> Corrupted whites and blues,
> Taverns torn down for banks, the personnel
> Grown fat and mulish, marbles clogged with soot . . .
> Things just aren't what they were—no more am I.

The leave-taking, commemorated in a poem called "Santorini: Stopping the Leak," is done under the aegis of various lurking horrors. Merrill has just undergone five sessions of radiation to destroy a plantar wart, and the radiologist's waiting room offers vistas of future cancer; a servant in Greece recalls her brother's drowning; the island of Santorini brings up the legend of the destruction of Atlantis by an earthquake. A wave of self-doubt enters Merrill's praise of poise in endings:

> We must be light, light-footed, light of soul,
> Quick to let go, to tighten by a notch
> The broad, star-studded belt Earth wears to feel
> Hungers less mortal for a vanished whole.
> Light-headed at the last? Our lives unreal
> Except as jeweled self-windings, a death-watch
> Of heartless rhetoric I punctuate,
> Spitting the damson pit onto the plate?

The recommendation of lightness is made more serious by its own final self-interrogation. Joy's grape is burst, as in Keats, upon the fine palate. But in Merrill the metaphor has soured until it fastens no longer on the flesh of the fruit, but rather on the pit. Keats's deathwatch beetle has become the deathbed vigil and also the ticking timepiece of meter, its motive force the jeweled self-winding of the writer. Merrill's stanza in this poem is a version of Yeats's (and Byron's) ottava rima. Merrill adds a fourth rhyme for English ease, but keeps the terminal couplet, its finality clamping each stanza shut.

Throughout the poem "the vanished whole"—youth, love, and a country lost—is treated with comedy, irony, and pathos. In the nightmarish middle of the poem, Merrill has a vision of himself being drained of all existence through the "leak" in his irradiated foot. Other existences, borne in images, begin to invade his consciousness, thousands of other potential beings eager to take his place in the universe, as his own vitality seeps away. The press of images toward embodied being is like the press of a crowd to be admitted to a restaurant:

> Vignettes as through a jeweler's loupe descried,
> Swifter now, churning down the optic sluice,
> Faces young, old, to rend the maître d's
> Red cord, all random, ravenous images
>
> Avid for inwardness, and none but driven
> To gain, like the triumphant sperm, a table
> Set for one—wineglass, napkin, and rosebud.

A passage like this one tests the reader's affinity for Merrill. Those of us who find in him something that nobody else now writing affords us would have to point to the combination, visible here and frequent in Merrill, of savagery and civilization. The demands of biology, blood, and nerves (the optic sluice, the ravenous bodily appetites, the triumphant sperm) intermix in him with their utmost ritualizing in formality (the stylizations by which a restaurant surrounds appetite, the scrutiny, at once magnifying and miniaturizing, of the jeweler's eyeglass). Both are here imitated by the verse, beginning in observation, accelerating in momentum, and then brought up short by the absurd and yet touching tableau of the formal table set for one—a metaphor for existence conceivable only in Merrill.

But this is all written, as I have said, in the service of fear—the fear of existence leaking away. Throughout this volume Merrill faces his own extinction, and suggests fantasies of survival:

> Could a soul that clung
> To its own fueling senses crawl at last
> Away unshriveled from the holocaust?

In fact, in the poem on Santorini, Merrill does survive. A small moth—Psyche—appears, reassuring him that his soul still lives, and a familiar pain in his foot tells him that the plantar wart has begun to grow back, "stopping the leak":

> In gloom the peevish buzz
> Of a wee wingèd one-watt presence short-
> Circuiting compulsively the panes
> Gone white. My drained self doesn't yet . . . yet does!
> From some remotest galaxy in the veins
> A faint, familiar pulse begins. The wart,
> Alive and ticking, that I'd thought destroyed.
> No lasting cure? No foothold on the void?

"The last kiss," Yeats wrote, "is given to the void," but Merrill has not quite reached that point. Life and the wart start up anew.

Other poems exhibit a less comic resolution of the shadow of death. All sorts of death take place here, notably in three short lyrics grouped under the title "Topics." In the first, a poem about terrorism, a woman tourist is shot dead. In the second, the governments of Russia and the United States survive in their bunkers after an atomic war. In the third, a poem on knowledge, man has traded earthly happiness for the knowledge of nuclear fission. For this last lyric, Merrill borrows Shel-

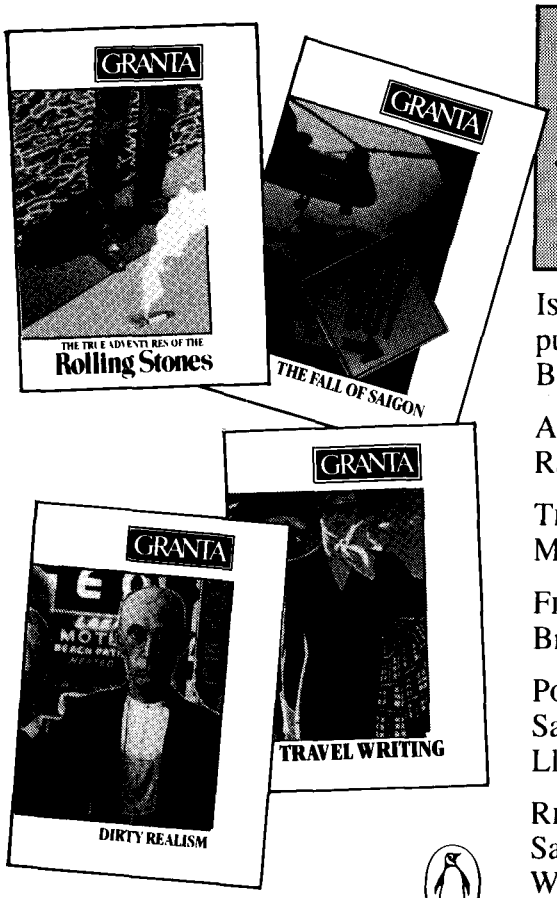
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GRANTA

"England's best-selling, most influential literary magazine."—TIME

AVAILABLE, AT LAST, IN AMERICA

In February 1983, Penguin Books in Britain began publishing GRANTA, the paperback magazine of new writing. The response was immediate:



"A magazine absolutely charged with life and risk."
—GEORGE STEINER

"A courageous literary magazine." —GRAHAM GREENE

"GRANTA has rapidly become the premier literary magazine of Britain—and mainly because it is for writers and readers—not critics and academics." —JOHN FOWLES

ISSUE AFTER ISSUE, four times a year, GRANTA has published the most engaging, talked about writing in Britain today:

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: Saul Bellow, Doris Lessing, Raymond Carver.

TRAVEL WRITING: Paul Theroux, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jan Morris.

FICTION: Nadine Gordimer, Italo Calvino, Anita Brookner, Jayne Anne Phillips.

POLEMIC: Milan Kundera on the failure of the West, Salman Rushdie on the revival of the Raj, Mario Vargas Llosa on cheap intellectuals.

REPORTAGE: James Fenton looting the US embassy in Saigon, Michael Herr traveling across Europe with Wim Wenders, Stanley Booth with the Rolling Stones, Redmond O'Hanlon loose in the jungles of Borneo.

IN THE LAST YEAR and a half, each issue of PENGUIN GRANTA has sold out within seven days. In the last year and a half, each issue of GRANTA has been read by more people than any other literary or political magazine published in the UK today. More than the TLS. More than the New Statesman.

AS OF JULY 1985, GRANTA IS AVAILABLE IN AMERICA

For only $12, you can get a year's subscription, 4 issues each the size of a paperback book, and, at no additional cost, the First US Edition. A single copy of GRANTA sells for $6.95 in bookstores: you save over $22, unless you subscribe for 2 or 3 years and save as much as $60. GRANTA will come to you on approval for three months: during that time you may, if dissatisfied, cancel your order and your money will be refunded in full.

Please send me GRANTA for: ☐ 1 yr. at $12 ☐ 2 yrs. at $22 ☐ 3 yrs. at $30

Name

Address

City State Zip

☐ Check enclosed ☐ Bill me later

GRANTA: 13 White St., New York, NY 10013

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ley's and Yeats's prophetic four-beat closed quatrains, and retells, with a Frostian force, the origin and ultimate glory of the universe before the earth blew itself up. (The poem is called "Caesarion," after the son of Caesar and Cleopatra, who was put to death by Octavian.)

A glow of cells in the warm Sea,
Some vaguest green or violet soup
Took a few billion days to loop
The loops we called Eternity.

Before the splendor bit its tail
Blake rendered it in aquatint
And Eddington pursued a glint—
Recoil, explosion—scale on scale.

What stellar hopefuls, plumed like Mars,
Sank to provincial rant and strut,
Lines blown, within the occiput?
Considering the fate of stars,

I think that man died happiest
Who never saw his Mother clasp
Fusion, the tiny naked asp,
By force of habit to her breast.

Merrill's pen turns to such subjects with a degree of anger, an anger turned even against writing itself (that the sign of vivacity should become the sign of extinction). This anger turns even against his own poetic masters, who were too quick to praise the word as moral and life-giving. In a poem about the bombing of Beirut, death appears again:

By noon, fire from the same blue heavens
Had half erased Beirut.
Allah be praised, it said on crude handbills,
For guns and Nazarenes to shoot.
"How gladly with proper words," said
Wallace Stevens,
"The soldier dies." Or kills.

Merrill's quarrel with Stevens's aphorism marks a change in our 20th-century perceptions of government. Stevens's words were written in the idealism of World War II, an idealism about war impossible for Merrill, who quarrels too with Yeats's admiration for Renaissance Italian dukes:

Above
Lie field and vineyard, castle built
To nurture intellect, art, love
Together with, let's face it, guilt,
Deception, strife.

The same consciousness of disintegration, catabolism, entropy ("Coils of shot film, run-down DNA") quarrels with Rilke's idealization of art in the archaic torso of Apollo, which spoke to him in shining potency, saying, "You must change your life." Merrill's exhumed Greek gods have a different, more impatient message:

Expect no
Epiphany such as the torso
In Paris provided for Rilke. Quit
Dreaming of change. It is happening
Whether you like it or not,
So get on with your lives. We have done.

Merrill's art, so apt for sensuality, travel, and domesticity, recently passed through the purgatorial trial of *The Changing Light at Sandover*, a long three-part poem that consisted of conversations with the dead. That poem now seems to be a threshold over which Merrill had to pass in order to translate himself from one of the living to one of the (potentially) dead. The punning title of the present volume, *Late Settings*, looks toward a jeweler's art, a last music, and a setting sun. The sober coloring of the sunset diffuses itself through the book, sometimes glimmering in afterglow, sometimes flashing in fission.

MERRILL'S Herbertian variety of technique appears here in experiments variously successful, but always interesting to watch. Merrill can imagine, for instance, a stanza like a house of cards for a poem ("An Upset") about the collapse of a table that had belonged to his grandfather. Everything falls on the floor, "ashtray, lamp, magnifying glass," books:

Whew. A disaster zone
Facing therapy: sandpaper, clamps and
glue,
Jetsam and overflow's diversion to
shelves
Unbuilt, if not to plain
Oblivion. . . .
Another "flood" behind us,
Now to relearn
Uprightness, lightness, poise:
First things—the lamp supposes, prone
Yet burning wildly on.

The interleaving of five-, four-, three-, and two-stress lines (marked by differing marginal indentations) is as "upsetting" as the disorder on the floor; and yet the very order of the indenting reflects the lamp of intellectual light, inquisitive even in disaster, "prone" and almost rhymeless, but "burning wildly on."

Throughout this book, things burn and are burned, scorched, irradiated. The divine Greek sun even burns a hole in Merrill's film. The smallest sparks of burning in the collection shine in the poem that is placed first. They come from the cigarettes lit in the dark "between Earth and Venus"—two other spots of light in the night sky—as Merrill and his companion stand on the courthouse lawn at dusk. The poem, a small prospective self-elegy in dimeter, is called, innocently enough, "Grass":

The river irises
Draw themselves in.
Enough to have seen
Their day. The arras

Also of evening drawn,
We light up between
Earth and Venus
On the courthouse lawn,

Kept by this cheerful
Inch of green
And ten more years—fifteen?—
From disappearing.

Here, and elsewhere in this volume, Merrill returns to some of his earliest experiments in rhyme: rhyming two words of which one has an extra syllable ("irises" with "arras," "between" with "Venus"); rhyming two words by their penultimate syllables alone ("cheerful" with "disappearing"); rhyming aslant ("seen" with "in"); keeping a single rhyme going throughout a whole poem ("in," "seen," "between," "Venus," "green," "fifteen"). There are graceful non-signifying "rhymes," like the internal orthographic resemblance between "*river*" and "*irises*," and the phonic resemblance between "*even*ing" and "*Ven*us" (the evening star). Merrill is still fond of zeugma, the figure that links two unlikely words in syntactic twinship (here "inch" and "years": "We are kept from disappearing into the earth by this cheerful inch of lawn and by ten—or fifteen?—more years"). Zeugma is the figure most emblematic of the comic union of body and soul; the body stands on the grass, the soul extends itself into certain and uncertain future time. As in this case, Merrill's formal figures almost always carry meaning; his metaphors brim with signification. His allusions are not inert, but transformative. He remembers, for instance, the Rubáiyát:

The Moving Finger writes; and having
writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

Merrill's grim and witty reversal of Fitzgerald, in which the Writing Finger becomes the Erasing Snail, is spoken by one of the fish in the sonnet called "Think Tank":

. . . at our best we were of one mind,
Did our own sick or vital things
Within a medium secured by trick

Reflections over which, day, night, the
braille

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eraser glided of the Snail
Our servant, huge and blind.

In the past few years Merrill has substituted Florida for Greece during the winter, and many of these poems take a wild new energy from the contradictions of the Florida scenery. The most remarkable among this group is a poem about Palm Beach, to which I will come in a moment. But first I want to mention, as an example of Merrill's "Florida writing," a poem about innocence being caught by experience. Tropical fish are being caught from a pier by fishermen using other fish as bait; young prostitutes are being hauled into court. These two narratives are combined, at the end of the poem, with a reminiscence of Merrill himself, at eight, entering into experience. Here are the central stanzas, full of brilliant concision:

These floozy fish—

Ceramic-lipped in filmy
Peekaboo blouses,
Fluorescent body
Stockings, hot stripes, . . .

Jailbait consumers of subliminal
Hints dropped from on high
In gobbets none
Eschews as minced kin;

Who, hooked themselves—bamboo diviner
Bent their way
Vigorously nodding
Encouragement—

Are one by one hauled kisswise, oh
Into some blinding hell
Policed by leathery ex-
Justices each

Minding his catch, if catch is what he can,
If mind is what one means—
The torn mouth
Stifled by newsprint, working still. If . . . if . . .

The little scales
Grow stiff.

This lyric imagining of "The bite. The tug of fate" is what poets can do to bring the various foci of perception (nature, others, self) into one point of attention. Caught fish, street crime, growing up are not three subjects in the poem, but one, and the distress in the disintegration of meaning ("Minding his catch, if catch is what he can, / If mind is what one means— . . . / If . . . if . . .") finds its visual embodiment in the torn mouth of the fish, and the callous reporting in newsprint of police-blotter scandal.

Merrill's fusion of levels of perception at high emotional temperature is brought off most brilliantly in "Palm Beach with Portuguese Man-of-War," an elegy of sorts for Merrill's wealthy thrice-married father (who is buried, as a note tells us, in West Palm Beach). The poem uses no punctuation, letting its images rise surrealistically untethered. The title suggests a tropical painting like those of Martin Johnson Heade, in which an exotic object like a hummingbird or an orchid is set against a carefully rendered landscape: Merrill's object is the "baby gorgon," a man-of-war jellyfish blown ashore on the long spine of sandy beach, waiting to be reclaimed by the Whitmanian sea. The poem owes a good deal to Hart Crane's and Elizabeth Bishop's tropical poems, but is nonetheless wholly Merrill's own in its anatomy of tycoons, their female hangers-on, their sexual and social forays, their eventual tombs. The poem offers no editorial explanations for its processional images. It begins with the virgin beach itself:

A mile-long vertebrate picked clean
To lofty-plumed seableached incurving ribs

Poor white the soil like talcum mixed with grit

The beach is then colonized, irrigated, built up:

But up came polymorphous green

No sooner fertilized than clipped
Where glimmerings from buried nozzles rose

And honey gravel driveways led
To the perpetual readiness of tombs

Tombs and rooms are indistinguishable in Merrill's Florida:

Shellwhite outside or white-on-white
A dropping bird motif still wet

Pastel and madrepore the shuttered rooms'
Nacreous jetsam wave on wave

The poem turns satiric on the subject of the newly divorced and lustful aging tycoon at dinner parties:

Having swept our late excrescences
The wens and wives away to mirrorsmoke

Place settings for the skin
Diver after dark the extra man

Drowning by candlelight whose two minds reel
How to be potent *and* unsexed

Worth a million *and* expendable
How to be everybody's dish

The poem envisages the tycoon's destruction by women as an underwater holocaust by cannibal fish:

New in paper
The Case for Animal Rights
TOM REGAN
"His latest book is unquestionably the best work yet to appear in its field, surpassing even Peter Singer's famous *Animal Liberation*. . . . The sections on normative ethics can be read independently of the sections on animals and are probably the most important contribution to this branch of philosophy since John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*."—*Choice*
$9.95

At bookstores or order from
UNIVERSITY OF
California PRESS Berkeley 94720

FLORENCEWALKS
by Anne Holler

Four intimate walking tours of Florence's most historic and enchanting neighborhoods, with maps, photos, and a selected list of restaurants and shops

$9.95 at your bookstore,
or from the publisher.

Holt, Rinehart and Winston
385 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And not to have seen through the glass visor
What would be made of him some night

By the anemone's flame chiffon gown
Like those downtown in the boutiques

By razor labia of hangers-on
To territories this or that

Tiny hideous tycoon stakes out

The destruction takes place on a coral reef:

Empire wholly built upon albino

Slaves the fossil globules of a self-
Creating self-absorbing scheme

Giddy in scope pedantic in detail

Over the coral reef float the jellyfish:

Over which random baby gorgons

Float without perception it would seem
Whom their own purple airs inflate

And ganglia agonizingly outlive
Look out! one has been blown ashore

For tomorrow's old wet nurse to come
Ease from the dry breast and sheet in foam

Hatred and pity coexist in this impersonal elegy. Merrill has so often written in the first person that this chilling drift of images unanchored to a personal speaker is the more noticeable. The poem makes no concessions; and while this may annoy some readers (those who want personal speech, autobiographical narrative, explicit editorializing, "communication"), I think it is a proof of strength in Merrill to resist the temptation to annotate his images. After all, all intelligible poems become understood in time.

There is no poem in this volume that is not worth reading. Some are slight, grace notes and observations. Some are chapters in Merrill's continuing verse autobiography (notably the genial "Clearing the Title," on acquiring a house in Key West); some continue the exploration of Merrill's favorite images (the soul-moth, the peacock, the Greek world). Merrill has added yet one more poem to his "Days of . . ." series (the title borrowed from Cavafy) with "Days of 1941 and '44," a fierce sonnet sequence in which we see Merrill at 15 ("in those days less than nothing, / A shaky X on panic's bottom line?") experiencing his aesthetic conversion:

In vain old Mr Raymond's sky-blue stare
Paled with revulsion when I spoke to him
About my final paper. "Jim,"
He quavered, "don't, *don't* write on Baudelaire."

But Merrill does write on Baudelaire ("Faith rose dripping from the false"), and goes on to enter the Army, where he reads Proust ("basic training") and hears of the death of a schoolmate who had, a few years before, tormented him:

The nightmare shower room. My tormentor leers
In mock lust—surely?—at my crotch.
The towel I reach for held just out of reach,
I gaze back petrified, past speech, past tears.

Now the tormentor is killed in battle, and the 18-year-old Merrill does not know how to absorb that death: "The *nothing you'd become took on a* weight / No style I knew could lighten." The oblique and beautiful ending of the sequence shows Merrill in battle-training under real fire:

Beneath unsimulated fire he'd crawl
With full pack, rifle, helmeted, weak-kneed,
And peeking upward see the tracers scrawl

Their letter of atonement, then the flare
Quote its entire red minefield from mid-air—
Between whose lines it has been life to read.

As the poet-to-be reads between the lines of the tracer bullets and perceives the entire red minefield of life, baffled by the death of his schoolmate who has been transformed from the tormentor into the tormented, lines of life and art begin to intertwine, as hatred ("you were my first true hate") and atonement converge.

Merrill is not often praised for concision; he is considered an elaborate, and elaborating, writer. Yet his lines, here as in "Palm Beach," tell a great deal in a short space. His drive toward the concise is, interestingly, not a drive toward the aphoristic or the epigrammatic, the two modes toward which concision tends. On the contrary, it is a drive toward the complex and dense image that will be perceptual, personal, social, and philosophical at once ("the floozy fish . . . subliminal jailbait . . . hauled into some blinding hell policed by ex-justices"). Such images become impatient of syntax, of commentary, even of punctuation (as in "Palm Beach"). A "cinéma-mensonge," as Merrill calls it in "Santorini"—a free-floating film of hallucinatory imagery—replaces, as objective correlative, the too-logically articulated process of explanation. The *mensonge incontinent* of poetry has here been brought to a level of high inner articulation, so much so that it explains itself by its consummately accurate choice of substantive and epithet.

I would not trade this rendered essence for the more conversational séances of Merrill's trilogy. But I am glad that traces of Merrill's poignant early style remain, not least in a triumphant poem about Proustian memory (reductively called "The House Fly"). In earlier volumes there were love poems to a Greek named Strato; later there were angry, ironic, and bittersweet adieus to him. Now, in a poem at once factual, comic, touching, and ghostly, Strato is *named and remembered, the earlier* bliss and the later blight of love both subsumed in the ritual of memory provoked by the annual return of the house fly, a "low-mimetic" version of Merrill's psyche, the winged soul. The first stanza compares past kisses to present psychic malaise:

Come October, if I close my eyes,
A self till then subliminal takes flight
Buzzing round me, settling upon the knuckle,
The lip to be explored not as in June
But with a sense verging on micromania
Of wrong, of tiny, hazy, crying wrongs
Which quite undo her—look at that zigzag totter,
Proboscis blindly tapping like a cane.

Merrill says somewhere in the volume that he wants a tone that avoids both levity and leadenness, and this stanza will serve as an example of what he means, in its portrait of the self-as-pensioner—fretful, tottering, blind, obsessive in complaint.

The second stanza shows us a more frightful self—the middle-aged self as compulsive artist, unable to leave off the rhythmic self-grooming motions that have become a habit. The house fly resumes her "grand toilette":

Unwearying strigils taken to the frayed,
Still-glinting wings; the dull-red lacquer head
Lifted from its socket, turned mechanically
This way and that, like a wristwatch being wound.

These passages, with their irritable and bitter Popian accuracy, are the best in the poem, and may be taken to represent Merrill's sense of having been unwittingly deprived of motive while still in the habit of motion. Stevens called this state "desire without an object of desire," and diagnosed it bleakly. But Merrill, for better or worse, does not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

end his poem in the desert of the present. Instead, he turns gratefully back to memory and its assuaging images, telling us that the fly-Psyche is still worthy of her cult:

> Downstairs in this same house one summer night,
> Founding the cult, her ancestress alit
> On the bare chest of Strato Mouflouzélis
> Who stirred in the lamp-glow but did not wake.
> To say so brings it back on every autumn
> Feebler wings, and further from that Sun,
> That mist-white wafer she and I partake of
> Alone this afternoon, making a rite
> Distinct from both the blessing and the blight.

This daring passage evokes at once the utter foolishness of love—its symbol a fly on the chest of someone absurdly named Mouflouzélis (who is nonetheless the sleeping Eros of the lamp-glow)—and its utter imprinting of existence, so much so that we are all willing to take that "last communion in the haze" (Dickinson) of the Indian summer sun. Merrill insists on the value and meaning of early love in later life, even if memory brings it back on ever-feebler wings.

THOSE OF US who read Merrill to know what to do with our sentiments, even to know what our sentiments are (since poets are more expert than the rest of us in human diagnosis), are told by this poem—on the level of its last message—that the infection of general disappointment and dismaying mechanical habit of middle age is not particular to us. The poem suggests that the erotic idealizations of the past are not entirely invalidated by the frayed and fretful present. We may agree or disagree, but the question has been put, and an answer of sorts given, in the homage to memory.

The poem puts its question and answer in painfully particular terms—"tiny, hazy, crying wrongs," a "proboscis blindly tapping," "unwearying strigils," "the dull-red lacquer head," "the bare chest of Strato Mouflouzélis," all of them at once exactly descriptive and either grimly or absurdly ironic. Aside from the experience reenacted in the little personal drama of the poem—the annual return of the house fly and the earlier self it calls to mind—the poem belongs to the classical tradition of autumn elegy and of cult celebration, at once revising these forms in an ironized modernism, and paying tribute to their staying power in the lyric tradition. If the forms remain, perhaps eros remains as well; under the mechanical turnings of the tired head, something stirs in the lamplight. It comes as a balm that Merrill should suggest as much. But for me it is a greater balm to see the baffled proboscis and the weary dull-red head put into words, the ultimate relief of poetry being the knowledge that such tenuous states of feeling are finally expressible. And though *Late Settings* is, as I have said, full of holocausts and upsets, apprehensions and irritabilities, it shows undiminished luster in its still-glinting wings of consummate expression.

HELEN VENDLER

Helen Vendler teaches English at Harvard. She has edited *The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry*, to be published this fall by Harvard University Press.

JOHNNY, WE HARDLY KNEW YOU

Breaking Points
by Jack and Jo Ann Hinckley with Elizabeth Sherrill

(Chosen Books: Zondervan, 375 pp., $16.95)

All of us like to talk about what we were doing and how we reacted at the time of a presidential assassination. Maybe we like to feel implicated in the great dramas of public life; or maybe we sense, unconsciously, that it's a good idea to have an alibi for the most Oedipal of public crimes. I was at home with a sick child when Reagan was shot in March 1981, and my first, or second, reaction was to worry that his assailant might be black or a member of some other unpopular and easily targeted subgroup—a homosexual, a Rastafarian, a Hasidic Jew, or a free-lance revolutionary of the left. So I was profoundly relieved when it turned out that the would-be assassin was a blond young man with wealthy Republican antecedents and white-supremacist leanings. The same culture that had given us President Reagan had, with Hegelian wit, produced his would-be killer.

John Hinckley's mother, Jo Ann, was at home ironing when she heard the news, and no one could have been more shocked. John had always been a good boy, no trouble at all, and here he had gone and shot four men in cold blood, among them the president, whom the Hinckleys admired for his hard line on law-and-order. What follows, as related by Jo Ann and her husband, Jack, in *Breaking Points*, is a fine example of the "ordeal" genre of popular literature, wherein ordinary people sink into alcoholism, undergo chemotherapy, or lose a child to the ranks of the missing, and after incalculable suffering, recover sufficiently to write an inspirational book Unfortunately, we learn early in this one that when bad things happen to good people, they do not necessarily have much to say beyond the kind of neutral information strangers exchange on airplanes: how long it took to get to the airport (the Hinckley's are endlessly shuttling between their home in Colorado and Washington, where John was held and tried); where to find a reasonably priced motel; and the problems of shopping for a young man who is not allowed, for reasons of safety, to wear a belt, a tie, or shoelaces.

Still, there is plenty to keep the enterprising reader going. Amateur forensic psychiatrists, for example, will be drawn to the mystery of young John. As everyone knows, his motive for shooting the president was "to impress Jodie Foster," the actress who had appeared in the movie *Taxi Driver*. In a decision that almost discredited the insanity defense once and for all, the jury ruled that Hinckley Jr. was not just a "spoiled rich boy," as the prosecution argued, but a genuine nut.

The observations of his parents amply support this verdict, and it is hard to discount them as a self-serving, after-the-fact defense, so ingenuous are the Hinckleys on the subject of mental illness. They had not found it odd that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

little John had not cried or shown much of any emotion from the age of seven on, that he didn't talk a lot, or that he had no friends in school. And the fact that all the responsibilities of young adulthood—jobs, college, car maintenance, and so on—so persistently eluded him seemed to them to be a matter of "immaturity" rather than any more fundamental derangement.

So how could such normal, decent parents have raised up this lethally dis-

LITERATE T-SHIRTS!
Virginia Woolf, Sartre, Shakespeare, Thoreau, Cheshire Cat, White Rabbit, Beethoven, Freud, Austen, Sherlock Holmes, Tolkien, Poe, Twain, Nietzsche, Bach, Rasputin, Trollope, Kerouac, Van Gogh, Da Vinci, Robert E. Lee, others.
Sizes S, M, L, XL. T-shirt: (white, lt blue, or red) $10.50, 4/$38. **Sweatshirt** (grey) $19, 2/$36. **Ship:** $1 per piece.
Illus. brochure 75¢
Historical Products, Box 220 CK Cambridge, MA 02238

Literary Services
AUTHORS WANTED BY NEW YORK PUBLISHER
Leading subsidy book publisher seeks manuscripts of all types: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, scholarly and juvenile works, etc. New authors welcomed. Send for free, illustrated 40-page brochure NR-1. Vantage Press. 516 W. 34 St., New York, N.Y. 10001

"'BARBARY PIRATES: Moorish corsairs who plagued Mediterranean shipping from the sixteenth century until France occupied Algeria in 1830.' Yes. And food, indeed, for thought."

For a free copy of the current issue of National Review write to Dept. N-13. 150 East 35th Street. New York, N.Y. 10016.

Call for any current book
● Amex, MasterCard, Visa or check.
● We ship immediately, anywhere in the world. ● Gift wrapping available.
● Mail orders welcome.
BOOK CALL™
1-800-255-2665
In CT or Worldwide (203) 966-5470
59 Elm Street, New Canaan, CT 06840

oriented psychopath? For surely the Hinckley family was the paradigm of Republican virtue: a hardworking, cardiac Type A, entrepreneur father; a stay-at-home mother engrossed in domestic detail; two older children who turned out as perfect clones of their parents—a girl who marries well and becomes a housewife and a boy who goes into Hinckley Sr.'s business. But there are clues that all was not well. Jo Ann was so home-loving that at one point she developed agoraphobia, and could not even go out to a supermarket without experiencing waves of panic. Little John was clingy and excessively dependent on his mother; some of his adult symptoms almost seemed to be modeled on her agoraphobia. And while these two were withdrawing into some kind of Oedipal folie à deux, Jack was too busy and too seldom home to notice.

THIS, the reader will note, is exactly the kind of situation that preoccupied American psychiatry in the era of the feminine mystique. Take a full-time mother, infantilized by daily details and neglected by an overworked husband, an anomic little kid, and an emotionally AWOL father, and you had the makings of a fiend. Psychiatrists did not, of course, advise mothers to get out of the house, but they did urge fathers to keep an eye on things and to counter the crushing force of Momism by taking the kid out now and then to pitch a few balls. But no psychiatric insights penetrated the Hinckley household, and we are not surprised to learn (nor, strangely, are the Hinckleys) that "Jodie," the focus of John's homicidal obsessions, is also Jo Ann Hinckley's nickname.

Perhaps it is fear of what lies outside that makes the interior of the family so rigid and subdued, like life inside a well-run bunker. The world of the Hinckleys was the rootless, middle-class Sunbelt culture that nurtures pro-family values, Christian fundamentalism, and occasional mass murderers. Families move frequently, but without compromising their parochialism. Everywhere, people are white, Christian, Republican (Jo Ann explains John's egregious prejudices by saying he had "never been around people of other races"). Somewhere outside there are malign elements—minority groups, rock musicians, big government, and the cynical, Godless cosmopolites who dominate the media.

Mothers in this culture do not lavish attention on their children, but on their furniture. (Jo Ann is too exhausted by her pre-Christmas housecleaning to be much fun on the holidays.) Religion provides the only counterpoint to the family tasks of earning and spending; there is no hip vocabulary of "growing" or "relating." Even autism, one suspects, could easily be mistaken for good behavior. When the senior Hinckleys throw 25-year-old John out of the house to cure him of "immaturity"—and unwittingly precipitate the assassination attempt—John says, "I want to thank you, Mom, for all the things you've done for me all these years," and she answers, "You're very welcome." No wonder the senior Hinckleys, when they are finally enmeshed in the insanity plea, have to ask what "affectless" means.

Only by going outside the tribal institutions of family, church, and prayer group—by going to the suspect media—could John Hinckley find a way to give dramatic content to his misery. He took the movie *Taxi Driver*—in which a demented taxi driver "rescues" a child prostitute in an extravagant shoot-out—as a tale of mythic significance, a "sign" to give meaning to his life. This in itself is sad, for whatever John's problems, it is a desolate culture in which young men must make their vision quests at the triplex in the mall.

STILL, true to its genre, this book is meant to be an inspirational story. The Hinckleys suffer, and suffering must be redeemed by some uplifting insight or transformation. I fully expected the story to end with some family style religious epiphany in the den, or some lucky sighting of the deity in an airport parking lot. After all, their coauthor, writer Elizabeth Sherrill, is responsible for such previous titles as *The Cross and the Switchblade* and *God's Smuggler*; and the publisher of this book has thoughtfully included a bookmark inscribed with a few words on God, sacrifice, and grace. Yet despite the frequent outbreaks of family prayer and the account of a low-grade sort of born-again experience on Jack's part, God remains a minor character, indistinct and oddly reticent.

What the Hinckleys finally discover—and find themselves transformed by—are the liberal, therapeutic values of the world outside Sunbelt suburbia. They discover mental illness, and start their own foundation to let others know what it is and how to detect it. They learn something about minorities. Despite

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their misgivings, it was an almost entirely black inner-city jury that accepted the insanity plea and found John Jr. not guilty. They are interviewed by Barbara Walters and find out that the media are not all wickedness and distortion. Jo Ann even begins to show the first pre-feminist signs of independence, and Jack discovers that it is no shame to cry. At the end they are undergoing family therapy with John Jr., under the gentle guidance of a black psychiatrist.

In the index of *Breaking Points*, the Hinckleys provide us with a list of "warning signs" of mental illness. Parties to the recent Freud debates, acolytes of Lacan, and "new class" cosmopolites in general may find the Hinckleys' new take on mental illness as dangerously naive as their former ignorance. But I don't know. In what is still, despite John Hinckley, the age of Ronald Reagan, it is helpful to know that "feelings of being persecuted," " 'flat' emotions," "extreme aggressiveness," and "lack of sympathy with another's pain or need" should be taken as signs of trouble. What the Hinckleys learned and now would like to teach is something much simpler than psychiatry: that we all have to wake up and start paying attention to each other—to the real people we share the world with—because most of us are never going to impress Jodie Foster.

BARBARA EHRENREICH

Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of *The Hearts of Men* (Anchor: Doubleday).

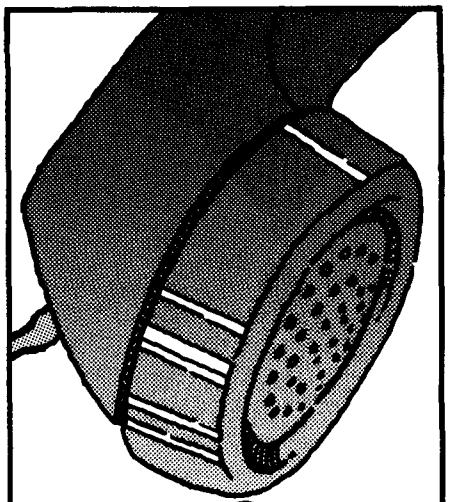
ODD COUPLE

Her First American by Lore Segal

(Knopf, 287 pp., $15.95)

"Ilka had been three months in this country when she went West and discovered her first American sitting on a stool in a bar in the desert, across from the railroad." So begins Lore Segal's third novel, a deceptively funny and engrossing love story between a seemingly improbable pair. "Ilka" is 21-year-old Ilka Weissnix from Vienna, a Jewish refugee from Hitler—to whose terror she has lost a father and misplaced a mother. After a decade of shuttling across Europe, Ilka is rescued in the early 1950s by a long-lost cousin in whose "Washingstein Heights" apartment she takes up residence. It doesn't take long for Ilka to realize that her eagerness to meet natives and improve her drolly anemic English is doomed to frustration by the ethnic reality of her Upper West Side environment: "In my building live only other Austrian, German and Czech. The Polish butcher corner of Broadway used to live . . . on our street in Vienna. My English teacher is a pedicure from Budapest." Ever-obliging cousin Fishgoppel, a student of the Talmud, Yiddish, and comparative English lit at Yale, treats Ilka to a train ticket West. It is at a roadside bar during her seven-day foray into "real America" that Ilka meets Carter Bayoux, who is on his way back to New York from California for yet another in a losing string of "brand-new start[s]."

"A large, stately, sad" man on the mean side of 50, Carter Bayoux is also black and alcoholic. When not in the "bughouse" or on a bender, this once prominent but now lapsed intellectual is a columnist for *The Harlem Herald*. As he admits to himself, it is an inglorious finish to a career studded with enough formers—lecturer, author, U.N. official, black leader, professor, and husband—to guarantee him a fairly decent obituary in *The New York Times*. A compulsive raconteur—"That is very Jewish. That's what midrashim are. Stories. Carter has a Jewish mind," says Fishgoppel—Carter Bayoux is also a lover of women, an impecunious epicure, and a firm practitioner of protocol defined as "the art of . . . not living by natural human feeling." He is a man who, though on the skids, possesses enough residual charm to retain access to a wildly eclectic cast of celebrities. More to the point, Carter Bayoux has the pedagogic zeal of



THE NEW REPUBLIC SUBSCRIBER SERVICE IS ONLY A PHONE CALL AWAY.

Do you have any questions about payments? Change of address? Delivery or other subscription problems?

Just pick up your phone and dial our toll-free hotline at

800-645-9559

(NY RESIDENTS CALL 800-732-9119)

Our operators are specially trained to provide you with quick, efficient subscription service.
(Call between 9:00 AM-5 PM, EST, Monday-Friday)

For most efficient service, please have a copy of your latest magazine handy. If you have a question concerning payment, please have a copy of your cancelled check in front of you so we can quickly resolve your problem over the phone.

Of course, we can still handle your business by mail if you prefer. Simply send us a copy of your address label from the front of your last magazine and your change of address or other correspondence to:

THE NEW REPUBLIC
PO Box 955
Farmingdale, NY 11737

Request for new subscriptions, renewals of current subscriptions and gift subscriptions should also be sent to the address above.

By phone or by mail, TNR Subscriber Service has never been easier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those who, having failed their potential on a monumental scale, feel compelled to deny others the luxury of their own mistakes. But he's an atypical teacher who lets loose his lessons with an equal measure of unrepenting swagger and tearful despondency.

Under Carter's erratic tutelage, Ilka first learns to master her new language. No mean task when one has to deal with such esoteric tabloid headlines as "NJ COPS QUIZ JINGLE BRA GALS." "New Jersey police question the young women who tried to get away with stolen money hidden in their underwear," Carter elucidates without missing a beat. On a loftier plane, and much to Fishgoppel's amazement, Carter introduces Ilka to Jane Austen: "Carter? Jane Austen? I thought . . . you said he was a Negro." From the jazz clubs of Harlem to the plush preserves of the Upper East Side, Carter steeps her in his own peculiar New York. Thanks to him, she meets Paul Robeson, Duke Ellington, as well as countless other acquaintances whose fame is lost on Ilka but clearly serves to restore Carter's increasingly blurred self-image. It doesn't always work though. When they go to hear Billie Holiday at Carnegie Hall, stoned, the "Strange Fruit" barely acknowledges him at intermission: "She is still the entertainer. I am the intelligentsia," Carter explains in a pique. And when at last they become lovers, Carter resolves Ilka's ultimately most pressing question: "I have always wondered before how people come to have taken their blouses off . . . I always wondered how the bed has become opened." To which Carter, the hapless husband to countless ex-wives, cheerily responds: "Me too. . . . Always, always wondered that."

Carter's American crowd captivates Ilka. Segal evokes a period when the urgent sense of a shared experience of prejudice united a community of intense Jewish liberals and black intellectuals. When the clan repairs to a rambling Connecticut mansion in a lengthy episode called "Summer," Segal deftly pits one group against the other so that what starts as an excruciatingly civil "honeymoon of mutual accommodation" somewhat prophetically degenerates into a cacophony of uproarious recriminations. Ethnic barbs fly and ethnic jokes abound, but since this is not a mean book, and since the period is pre-Jesse Jackson enlightenment, both are mostly self-inflicted—generally by Segal's black protagonists, who seem to have an easier time of preserving the entente cordiale.

"Even in laughter, the heart is sorrowful," warns one of the Bible's proverbs, and beneath all the laughter of his bohemian life Carter Bayoux is a desperate, thwarted man. Segal hauntingly juxtaposes the maniacally sociable Carter with the lonely alcoholic who inhabits the Bloomsbury Arms Hotel. Neither of his two fraying lifelines—the telephone and the constantly "sizzling" radio—offers much relief. Friends who are giving up on him cut short his compulsive nocturnal calls, and in a final blow to his already shattered ego, even Bucky Bailey, the avuncular host of the all-night radio show aptly called "Your Time To Talk," hangs up on him.

Carter Bayoux is not new to Segal's fiction. He first made a brief appearance in the final pages of a novel called *Other People's Houses*, a thinly disguised autobiographical account of Segal's youth as a refugee from Nazism. In the epigraph to that work, the author confides: "The 'Carter Bayoux' of my book once told me a story out of his childhood. When he had finished, I said, 'I knew just where your autobiography stopped and fiction began.' " In *Her First American* Segal shows just how well-founded her confidence in that assessment was. Filling in the outlines of the protagonist that the real Carter Bayoux once suggested to her, Segal creates a character who may well deserve a place in the pantheon of American fictional heroes. Conversely, perhaps because Segal herself felt threatened by autobiographical revelation, she has not done so well by her female protagonist. Often Ilka's naïveté injects a note of stylized cuteness, rather than energetic curiosity, into the novel. Unexpectedly, Carter's other loyal friend, Ebony Baumgarden, a strong-willed black woman whom Carter paints as "a beautiful hostile bitch," emerges as the real female force in the novel.

In the last pages of *Her First American*, Ilka turns to Ebony in search of some perspective on her relationship with Carter.

> "How do they think that I exploited Carter?"
>
> "That you *will* exploit him."
>
> "How will I exploit Carter?"
>
> "They think you will write a book about him. . . ."

Fortunately, Segal has.

LAURA OBOLENSKY

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

Reflections on Gender and Science by Evelyn Fox Keller (Yale University Press). How men have shaped the scientific method, and women might help reshape it. (Reviewed 7/15&22/85)

Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England by Louis Crompton (University of California Press). A revealing chapter in the history of intolerance. (7/1/85)

Lives of the Saints by Nancy Lemann (Knopf). Coming of age in a daze in New Orleans. (6/24/85)

Slow Homecoming by Peter Handke, translated by Ralph Manheim (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Three metaphoric and metaphysical parables. (6/17/85)

Irving Babbitt: An Intellectual Study by Thomas E. Nevin (The University of North Carolina Press). An intellectual biography of humanism's stern champion. (6/17/85)

Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank by E. James Lieberman M.D. (Free Press). Another chapter in the history of psychoanalysis. (5/20/85)

The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age by Walter A. McDougall (Basic). The story of the state, the scientists, and the exploitation of the galaxy. (6/3/85)

Women and Angels by Harold Brodkey (The Jewish Publication Society of America). Two ordinary fragments of a long-awaited novel, and a third remarkable one: the portrait of a revelation. (5/20/85)

The Call: An American Missionary in China by John Hersey (Knopf). An unsentimental saga of one Christian's half-century in China. (5/13/85)

The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams by Donald Spoto (Little, Brown). A thorough life of the carousing playwright. (5/13/85)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JERUSALEM DIARIST

Fresh Eyes

THERE IS NO BETTER WAY to see a familiar society afresh than by showing it to a child, as I did in Israel with my teenage daughter early in July. Had I pressed this country on her? I wondered. But parents inevitably press on their children the ideas, places, and commitments they value. What will happen afterward is anybody's guess. Still, Israel must be intriguing to any thoughtful young person, and particularly to one who has heard love expressed for it all her life and now could measure the reality against her father's obsessive dreams. For a frequent visitor like me, it was an opportunity to tour the country again, with a reason not to spend the days and nights in meetings with politicians and journalists discussing the ever-present but always different crises. My daughter's presence allowed me to see Israel again.

IN MOST PLACES, archaeology is history. Here, it is inescapably politics as well. The automatic majority in Unesco has once again condemned Israel, against all independent and reputable archaeological opinion, for excavating in ways that minimize the Moslem role in Jerusalem's history. Nothing would be more futile, of course, in a city dominated by two Islamic domes sitting atop the mount where the First and Second Temples once sat. I have been chairman of a foundation that financed many of the digs under attack. In searching for the city's past, we have dug with exquisite respect for the Islamic presence. In the Citadel dating to the Maccabees, but misnamed by history as David's Tower, are now also reconstructed places where the Prophet Mohammed apparently worshiped. To the west of the Herodian walls of the Temple Mount you will find evidence of the Umayyad conquest. In the south are restored not only Moslem traces, but also Hellenistic and Roman, Byzantine and Crusader, as well as the palpable testimony of the Jewish attachment to the stones of Jerusalem through the ages. Even in the restored ancient Jewish Quarter, reduced to rubble by the Jordanians during their 19-year occupation, a mosque dwarfing its surroundings has been allocated its place. This is no small matter. There are Christian and Hebrew ruins underneath many restored Moslem sites. There is always a choice. Less honest people elsewhere have excavated and demolished to reveal only the civilization in which they have an ideological stake.

FOR CENTURIES the first capital, the city built by King David 3,000 years ago, was thought to have been on the westernmost hill, called Mount Zion. That was a mistake. In fact, the city was on the southern slopes, adjacent to the one available water supply in the valley below. This site has now been excavated under the direction of my friend Yigal Shiloh of the Hebrew University. Opened to the public the week we arrived, it reveals engineering and architectural skills commensurate with the tenacity of David and his people. But they did not build only on bedrock. Before them, the archaeologists have discovered, was another city dating back at least five millennia. No wonder the Arabs and their allies do not want archaeology done in Jerusalem. For whenever there is digging, no matter how respectful of Islamic sensibilities, there is the unmistakable evidence of continuous Jewish inhabitancy. In the excavations near the southern end of the Western Wall, past what was once called the Wailing Wall, was found a fallen stone clearly etched with the directional legend, "to the place of trumpeting," meaning the place where the shofar was blown on the Sabbath and holy days. So thorough was the Roman sacking of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. that this is the only stone clearly extant from the Temple establishment proper. Even after the destruction and the dispersion, though, the dream of return always survived. Another stone in the wall still standing and recently excavated shows this vividly. On it is perhaps the first known example of political graffiti. The alphabet dates it to the fourth century after Christ. The Romans still ruled the city, but at least one Jew knew this was just an interval. He was inspired to scratch for eternity these words from Isaiah 66:14: "Ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb." But the comforting of Jerusalem, the vision of the restoration, did not happen until 1967.

I BROKE from my tourist's schedule by crashing the Fourth of July fest of the American Consul in Jerusalem. There are still two consulate buildings, a reminder of the walls that for nearly two decades cut through the heart of the city. One consulate, in the western part of the city, serves the Jews; the other, in the east, serves the Arabs. Until this year there were two Fourth of July parties, one in each consulate. This year there was one party, and it was held in the west, a grudging sign perhaps that Washington finally understands there are no longer two Jerusalems. It was a scene out of some American-style Kipling. A great official-looking edifice, Stars and Stripes flapping in the wind over a lush green veranda, tropical drinks, and an abundance of hot dogs, hamburgers, and french fries. Also an abundance of clerics: Moslems, Khadis, Greek Orthodox priests, Roman Catholic friars, Protestant deacons, Armenians, Copts, Russians, a few patriarchs and archbishops and just plain bishops, some rabbis—men of God all splendidly garbed, a sampling of the diversity of the monotheistic illumination. The religious did not mix. In Jerusalem, one is acutely aware of the wars among the Jews and the wars among the Moslems. But there are also antique wars among the Christians. They are reflected in the multiple sites claimed for the events along Calvary, and especially in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where violence is likely to break out if a cleric from one sect happens to cross the invisible lines dividing his turf from another's. In all, some three dozen Christian denominations are represented in the city, nine in this church alone.

AT THE CONSULATE, Israelis and Palestinian Arabs chatted amiably, if diffidently. Politicians, academics, journalists: the opinion-making class of the Holy City. I was introduced to a professor from Bir Zeit University in the West Bank who teaches a course, as I do, on nationalism. I offered to exchange reading lists; he didn't seem interested. I asked him if he assigned Shlomo Avineri's *The Making of Modern Zionism*, the standard text. He said it was optional reading. I wonder what is mandatory.

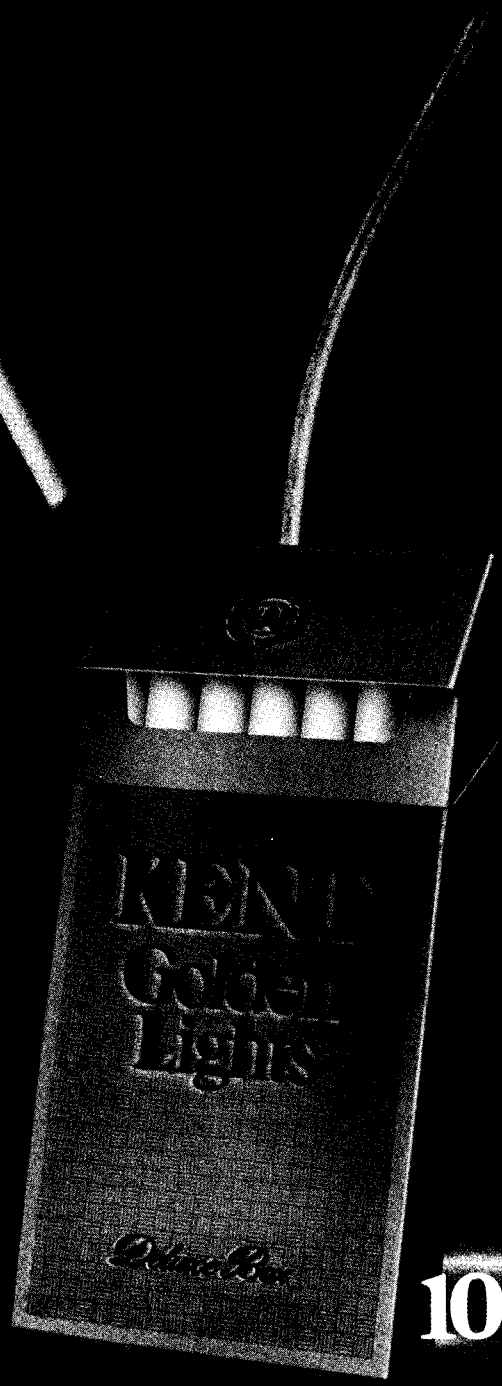
M.P.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

100s Box: 8 mg. "tar", 0.7 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC Method.

NEW GOLD BOX



100s

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED